

FOREWORD by *Brendan Grey*

While writing the history of the club, I was aware that any local history should reflect the wider history of the country as a whole. To ignore this is, in the opinion of some, to indulge in a spot of self-indulgent naval gazing. The development of Skerries Golf Club has a pattern which fits very well into the country's social history of the 20th century. In the early 1900s, Ireland was part of the British Empire and when the club was founded in 1905, it was British in culture. The members who joined the club in those early years were seen as the Old Order and to their credit, many golf clubs, rugby clubs, cricket clubs and other sporting organisations would not have been founded so soon without their drive and energy. As against that they tended to keep the golf clubs to themselves, exclusive of the majority of the population except those few who were acceptable and wealthy enough to be able to afford the fees.

The growth and establishment of a nationalist identity in the country, slowly began to change the status and outlook of the golf club. At first, it seemed to ignore what was going on, as the minutes have no reference to any outside influences other than the First World War and this catastrophic event takes up many paragraphs of minutes between 1914 and 1919. When the clubhouse was burned down in the early 20s, it is treated as an accident and no references are made to other such activities in Skerries itself. Even the fact that locks placed on the gates of the railway path, to exclude the public, were broken and removed does not get a mention until many years later.

The twenties ushered in the changes with an influx of the professional classes who were Irish in character. Many of the old order simply left the club and those who remained forged an alliance with the new order, and continued to run the club in a similar manner. After the decision in 1935 to play competitions on Sundays, the old order faded away and the professional classes ran the club. It remained fairly exclusive however as is shown by the fact that prospective members had to declare their occupation when applying for membership. While this rule did not apply in the early years, the old order had its own way of establishing suitability for membership. Many of the caddies of the time, were not exactly fulsome in their praises of the newer Irish order, when it came to comparing them with the previous regime. World War 2 had only a minor impact on the club as the course was not required for food production purposes. There were some shortages in certain commodities but the playing of golf was not seriously affected.

By the fifties the club was changing rapidly and over the next decades golf became a popular game for all, as people had more disposable income. The eighties and nineties have seen a huge development of golf courses throughout Ireland to cater for the demand for the game. Skerries again reflected this national trend and there has been a waiting list for membership at the club for some years. The opening of the new clubhouse in 1996 is evidence of what current members can afford to do.

I have no doubt that the people who established the first golf clubs in Ireland, could not have foreseen how enormously popular the game was going to become and it would be naïve to credit them with this foresight but it is ironic that a game begun centuries ago by ordinary people for amusement (Scottish shepherds to while away the time) should, through a long process of evolution, be back to being just that. For those who enjoy statistics, I wonder, how many games of golf were played on our course over the last 100 years? How many people played with such a variety of clothes and clubs? How many caddies were there? How many golf balls (or other 'things') lie buried under the fairways and ditches? The lists are endless and many members will have their own particular interests. The story of our club is a human story, 100 years of people playing a game, which has generated the full range of emotions, sometimes in the same day, and which, many believe, has few equals.

Years: 1905 -1919

When I started to research the early history of the club, and tried to establish its founders, I came across an age old and amusing problem. The "Irish Field" of July 1908 suggests that "Skerries Golf Club owes its inception to R.E Maunsell, T.S.F Battersby and H. Evans." The "Evening Mail" of April 1906, suggested that E.H.Bailey, T.S.F.Battersby and A.Hussey were the main movers. I suppose it all depended on which reporter was talking to which club member. It doesn't really matter if either report is accurate, for it is a matter of record that Skerries Golf was up and running in 1905. Three committee meetings, held at 45 Upper Mount St. Dublin, occurred 26/10/05; 9/11/05 and 7/12/05

and were attended by T.S.F Battersby, Edward H Bailey, Richard Eyre Maunsell, Henry Evans, Richard A Butler, J.R Taylor, Dr. B.P Healy, William R. Bailey, and chaired by the captain Anthony S Hussey. Lord Holmpatrick had agreed to be President, and by December a draft of the club rules was agreed and ordered for printing. W.C Pickeman, captain and Hon Sec of Portmarnock agreed to inspect the links and went on to design our first nine-hole course. Improvements were added by Cecil Barcroft of (Royal Dublin) Dollymount and the first clubhouse was designed by Mr. J. Howard Pentland. All three were soon elected honorary members of the club for their "outstanding" contribution to the formation of what we enjoy today as Skerries Golf Club.

A twenty-year lease was agreed with the Holmpatrick Est. through its agent Mr.G Fowler. £85 per annum was paid for the first 2 years and £125 p.a. for the remaining 18. Life membership was set at £10 and original members paid 1 guinea and no entrance fee. The clubhouse plans were put on hold temporarily as rooms, in the nearby Hacketstown house, were offered by a lady who was interested in establishing a boarding house there. Hacketstown House no longer exists but where it stood is now occupied by the farm buildings clearly visible on the land to the east of the railway line. By February of 1906 these plans were abandoned, and the first clubhouse was underway, built by Thomas Heeney -- (Grandfather of lady member Zeta Devine), of Balbriggan for the sum of £110. The links (course) itself, was soon in shape, and the cash book of the time shows payment to a variety of workers ---Messrs. Ryan, Bracken, Delaney, Bryan, Callaghan, and Coleman. M. Ryan was in charge until the greens were completed. The clubhouse, bar and catering were placed in the hands of Miss Minnie Evans who was an aunt of one of our longest serving members Des Cashell.

The official opening of the course on the 14th of April 1906, signalled the completion of the formation of the club. The ceremony was performed by Lord Holmpatrick, the club president, and attended by Edward Hamilton Woods of Milverton, vice-president and Anthony S. Hussey, captain. It is interesting to note that the opening drive from the first tee was struck by the Hon. Miss Hamilton. Ladies were very much part of the early club and although they were elected to associate membership status, they were entitled to propose and second members to the club. Now that the club was up and running, competition golf soon followed. The first was the Battersby Cup, which was then as now a mixed foursomes. Monthly medals followed from June onwards, and the first captain's prize was held in August. It was a qualifier with the best eight scores playing matchplay. For the record the best score was 73 and the eighth was 92. Medal competitions for ladies began in September. The fee for caddies was 4d for nine holes and 7d for eighteen (2p and 4p approx. in today's money)

A major development within the club, was the appointment in May 1906 of Michael Cahill as professional and greenkeeper and a course staff of T. Coleman and W. Petson. They soon initiated many changes starting with the widening of the 7th and 8th courses from 27 yds. to 40 yds. The word fairway does not appear in early golf vocabulary. What we call the course today, they called the links, and what they called course then, we call fairway today. It would be amusing to speculate how many of our modern day "hookers" and "slicers" would have coped with such narrow fairways. The rest of the course was covered in "rough" which was controlled by grazing sheep. The present practice ground was under tillage and a ball hit there was deemed lost.

In September the committee dealt with its first complaint, which concerned a member's handicap. No action was taken, as in those days a member of more than one club could play off different handicaps, which were based on different standard scratch scores. Sixteen months after the club was formed the first A.G.M. was held in the Imperial Hotel in Sackville St.(O'Connell St.) in January 1907 and showed an excess of expenditure over income of £70-15s-0d. A major decision taken at that meeting was to open the bar on Sundays, despite the objections of the Hon Sec E.H.Bailey.

E.H. was something of a formidable gentleman and served as Hon Sec. from 1905 to 1935 inclusively. He was the Secretary of the Dublin Port & Docks Board and was one of the few passengers from Skerries who travelled 1st Class on the GNR trains. To give an impression of this man, would be to repeat what a very senior member told me. "When Eddie Bailey spoke, the birds were quiet" There is no question however, that he was seen by the members as the guiding hand behind the early club and agree or disagree with the man's principles, his outstanding work was in no small way responsible for the club we now have. It was indeed those very principles that lead to his resignation in 1935 as Hon Sec. as he could not accept that competitions would be played on Sundays. Despite the best attempt of the club to get him to take the presidency after the death of Lord Holmpatrick, E.H. politely declined

and again citing his principles, he wished the club well. Thereafter, he rarely appears in the minutes.

In 1907 Lord Holmpatrick presented his cup, and this trophy is still very much part of the fixture list today. The committee had to deal with a complaint which repeated itself over the century, and that concerned a member playing with another member's clubs without permission. The correspondence ran for several weeks and was amusing for the incredible excuses and "misunderstandings" that occurred. The one factor common to these complaints is that the owner did not give permission for the clubs to be used. The matter seemed to have been settled quietly, unlike a similar incident decades later, when the culprit was confronted on the course and marched to the clubhouse, where he had to replace the clubs in the locker. The verbal exchanges must have been choice.

The course underwent many changes on the advice of Cecil Barcroft of Dollymount (R.Dublin) and a map of the course was presented to the committee by one of our early captains, J. Bamford. Unfortunately the map is not available to me as I write. Another first for the club was the playing of an interclub match against Dublin University and this consisted of 4 mixed foursomes and 8 singles. It is interesting to see that that early fixture has now been revived albeit in a different format, with the trophy presented by Dr. J.J.Bracken.

The major event of the year, however, was the holding of a professional tournament on September 17th. The prize money was collected by subscription from the members themselves. The first prize of £5 was won by Michael Moran of Dollymount with scores of 78 and 77 (177). Second prize of £3 was won by J. Barrett of Hermitage with 160. Joint thirds were Fred Smith of Dollymount and Jimmy Martin of Milltown with 162. Fifth was Michael Cahill of Skerries with 163, which included a course record of 71. Michael Moran was a very unusual golfer in that being born and brought up in the confines of Dollymount golf club, he learned the game by hitting golf balls with a made-up club. He went on to become a very stylish golfer and finished 4th in the Open (British) having had a disastrous 11 at a hole. When he joined the British army, he would regularly play in his uniform.

Dr. Bernard Healy, an uncle of Dr. Frank Healy, and a founder member, left the committee in January 1908, due to pressure of work and the Battersby cup was changed from a nine to an eighteen hole competition. In February of that year the club was affiliated to the GUI for the first time and in May we participated in the Junior Cup

For some time the club was in correspondence with the Great Northern Railway Co., on the possibility of making a path (the railway path) from the club to the bridge over the Dublin Rd. In April the GNR suggested a fee of £100 from the club for the project. This was agreed and the club succeeded in getting a reduction of rent to the Holmpatrick estate to help in this work. Several letters between E.H.Bailey and Col. Plews of GNR are interesting in their formality and for quite some time any deviation from this formality was treated with irritation and prompt admonishments by both parties. Another acquisition by the club at this time, was of a horse for the course. What was interesting, was that this purchase was achieved in the good old barter system. Mr. Howard McDonald of Flower & McDonald, the club's coal suppliers "sold" the horse for life membership worth £10. It is important to point out that horses were of great value to the club and up to the purchase of the first tractor, did all the work which we regard as tractor work today. Special shoes with two buckles, had to be made for them when the ground was very soft and for work on the greens.

In July, the Irish Field carried a substantial article on the club with details of the course and suitable photographs. It is to E.H.Bailey's credit that he placed a copy of the article in the early minute book. The details of the course are as follows, (I have placed the original yardage in brackets)

Hole	Name	Yards	Yards (Old)	Bogey	Difference
1	Glen	310	(319)	5	- 9
2	Grove	215	(196)	4	+ 19
3	Baldungan	367	(362)	5	+ 5
4	Curkeen	273	(211)	4	+ 62

5	Short	133	(165)	3	- 32
6	Rush	357	(320)	5	+ 37
7	Railway	283	(233)	4	+ 50
8	Milverton	298	(296)	5	+ 2
9	Holmpatrick	420	(387)	5	+ 37

Professional: M. Cahill 71

Amateur: F.H.Wilson / H.Burke 81

Bearing in mind the type of equipment used, it is easy to see why Skerries was regarded highly both in layout and difficulty. This was somewhat eased by the awarding of the first grazing contract to Mr.M. McGuirk at the end of the year. In subsequent years the club purchased its own sheep and the records show that the venture was a successful one due to the excellent care of Mr. W. McDonagh, grandfather of member Jim McDonagh. At the AGM in January 09 the club showed an excess of income over expenditure of 7s-3d. The Hon Sec, Edward Bailey, was elected a life member.

The Barton Cup interclub competition was initiated at Royal Dublin in 1909 and Skerries were drawn against Foxrock. The match was played at Skerries as the first drawn team had home advantage and Skerries won. The format was singles matchplay and the result was based on holes won. The team was S.W.Gilbert, F.Blood-Smyth, G.F.Rae, R.T.Ross, J.A.Denning, J.Griffin, L.Whyte, and E.E.Brady. They beat Foxrock by 16 holes to 8. The standard scratch score of our course was set at 76, but by August, it was reduced to 72, with the unusual bogey combination for the nine being 4, 3 ½, 4 ½, 4, 3, 4 ½, 4, 4, 4 ½. In April the club was extending the clubhouse, with the work done again by T.Heeney. This time a verandah was added. Although the quote was to be not more than £120, the final payment was for £195-9s-7d. History would repeat itself. Michael Cahill found himself leaving the club only to be reinstated later, when all misunderstandings were cleared up. One amusing complaint occurred when a member refused to replace a sod when asked to do so by his playing companion and proceeded to use strong language to emphasise his displeasure at being corrected. The committee felt the matter was a personal one and took no action.

It was quite an event when the GNR. agreed to stop the 9.00am. train from Amiens St. at the club in May. Although the platforms were to be built at different times and not all trains stopped, this event was the beginning of a long relationship between golf club and Railway Company.

In 1910 the association of golf club secretaries agreed a scheme for interclub matches and this was adopted by Skerries. In club correspondence Dollymount now becomes Royal Dublin and there is mention of a Finglas club, which I am informed was where the Fairways estate near Premier Dairies is today. The ladies section was affiliated to the I.L.G.U. and was in a position to elect its own captain and committee. Interestingly the first lady captain to appear on the captain's board was in 1923. A committee did form and the charge for entry to the medal competition was 6d (2½p). The payment of greenfees on Sundays became an issue in July as T. Coleman was given the task of checking vouchers between 11am and 1pm. A new well was sunk to a depth of 15ft. at a cost of £4-10s and by the year's end the course had 150 sheep and 2 rams grazing. While this may have been interesting for the rams, it brought the club into correspondence with the S.P.C.A. However, again, under the supervision of the estate agent, W. McDonagh, and the building of a proper shelter for the lambing season, everything went well.

By 1912 a new rule was introduced, whereby a member with more than one handicap had to play off the lower one. The bar hours on a Sunday were extended and members were in a position to order Sunday lunches on arrival at the club. The ladies were now in a position to obtain their own prizes from Elverys. However, they came into conflict with the general committee when they were forbidden to wear high heels on the course as they were causing damage to the greens. In July it was decided to display a list of caddies who were over 16yrs and these were to be paid in accordance with the Insurance Act. In October at the G.U.I. meeting, a motion proposed by Skerries, that all golf clubs should have a voice in the election of the management body of the Union, was passed with minor

ammendments.

The rule whereby committee members retired annually was adopted at the AGM in 1913. In March the telephone was installed on a twelve month rental of £6-5s-0d. and the GNR presented a cup worth £5. The format of the competition was for 16 members to qualify for matchplay, and the winner to get a replica. The records show that members, failing to pay the entrance fee in advance of playing a competition, were disqualified. In November course staff were earning the sum of 14s-0d per week.

A very sad event took place in Feb. 1914 when the body of an infant was found in the tool shed by T.Coleman. The committee failed to establish the circumstances of the tragedy and the matter was passed on to the authorities. With the departure of M.Cahill, the club appointed its second professional Jimmy O'Hare on a salary of £1 p.w.and purchased a lawn mower for £6. Jimmy was regarded as one of the better players and went on to win the IPGA championship when at Skerries. An amusing sequel to this was that he 'went on the beer' after his victory, something he had never done up to that. He was told not to cut the greens on Sundays, an instruction probably influenced by E.H.Bailey. However as a result of membership pressure at the AGM. the Sunday opening of the bar was extended from 11am. to 6pm.

In September, the second hole was extended by moving the tee back over the stream. This would correspond with where the 9th.tee (yellow) is today. However, the most important events were happening elsewhere. The First World War was to influence the club affairs for the next four years. Firstly, members of Royal Dublin were elected honorary members while Dollymount was occupied by the War Office. The GUI gave medals for competitions organized for the National Relief Fund and the club should publish fixtures and results for this cause only. The notice board carried requests for donations for boots for Lord Kitchener's army. In the following year the club gave £10 to the GUI for the entertainment of wounded soldiers. In 1916 sympathy was extended to Mr. E. Beatty, on the death of his son, who was killed in action. At the AGM. in 1917, Lieut. George Hamlet, a former captain of the club, was asked to convey a vote of thanks to the members fighting on the front and was wished a safe return. Two wounded officers, Lieuts. E.H.Knott and J.W.Mackenzie, who were living locally, were elected honorary members. The professional J.O'Hare and Miss Evans were paid war bonuses of 5s and 2s respectively and the Ministry Of Food required all clubs to furnish their sugar returns. Finally in 1919 the club requested the G.U.I. to hand over the balance of the money collected for the soldiers, to the Irish War Memorial Fund.

Within the club, life carried on very much as would be expected. The clubhouse furniture was improved. A member of the course staff was warned for looking for golf balls when supposed to be working. There is a reference to Skerries Lawn Tennis club being given permission to place a notice on the notice board. 1916 also saw the election of J.F.Owens to committee. Within the next decade this man was to have a profound influence on the running of the golf club, an influence carried on by his son G.H.Owens, who was our most famous golfing member. The AGM. of 1917 was held in Moran's Hotel in Dublin, due to the generosity of another former captain, Freddie Moran. A decision was made to give a second prize in monthly medals to the value of 5s. In September T.Coleman left the course staff and was replaced by N. Mansfield. W. Petson was replaced by his son. Both men were paid £1 p.w. Many changes to bunkers were made on the course but the only one that appears to survive today is the bunker on the first fairway.

At the AGM in 1919 ladies were allowed to play on Sundays

1920 - 1929

In 1920 the club sent subscriptions to the GUI. for the Michael Moran Memorial Cup, and to the R.and A. for the Open . Michael Moran had been the professional in Royal Dublin and had served in the British army during the war. The Moran cup is still being played for, and while Bill Kinsella was beaten in a final, his son Jimmy won it in 1968. Clubhouse security was a problem as evidenced by the Phoenix Insurance Co. refusing to insure against burglaries in June. A far greater problem for Phoenix occurred in August when the clubhouse was burnt to the ground, and when no evidence of malice was found by the local Volunteers, the committee submitted a claim in September. There is, on the other

hand, a rumour, and only a rumour that the clubhouse burning was deliberate. While I have no evidence to support this, I am conscious of the fact that there was quite a high level of IRA activity in the area. The coastguard station on Red Island was also burned to the ground, and amusingly enough, it was done with paraffin acquired on 'tick'---allegedly. It would be silly to think that the golf club, a bastion of the old order, would not be a target for such like attention.

The standard scratch of the course was fixed at 74 for summer and 78 for winter. The ILGU. fixed the bogey for all courses for ladies and this meant that ladies could now take control of their own handicapping systems. One slightly amusing complaint dealt with by committee in August, centred on a former captain R.T.Ross and a future captain Billy Towell. Ross sheltered from the rain and despite several attempts by Towell, a good golfer, to get him to continue and mark his card, Ross refused and used "strong" language to emphasise his point. One can only surmise at the content of the rebuke but the adverb 'off' was probably used. The committee took no action, as they decided the matter was a personal one.

The AGM. in 1921 passed plans for a new clubhouse and also decided to have two Vice Presidents. By March the committee accepted a tender of £1650 from a Mr.J.McCreadie of Malahide and negotiations began to reduce this to £1500. These developments brought the largest single intake of new members to the club at that time, 33. Mr. Howard McDonald presented his cup for mixed foursomes in August and we play for that trophy to this day. With the departure of Jimmy O'Hare, the committee appointed Dan O'Mahony as professional and went guarantor on his supply of golf balls from Messrs. Huet Bros. and the Indian Rubber G.P. and Telegraph Works Co., to an amount of £5. By the end of the year whiskey was 1s/9d per glass.

1922 saw the holding of the AGM. in the clubhouse for the first time and the club decided to place a photograph of the captain for the previous two years, Mr.F.A.Moran, on display as a gesture of appreciation for the use of his hotel over the years. He was also asked to assist the Hon. Sec. and Treas. E.H.Bailey in his heavy workload. In April lockers were installed in the clubhouse by M.Derham and on the course R.Fulham was replaced by Jack Fulham, father in law of former captain Paddy O'Brien. Jack was to spend the rest of his working life at Skerries until his retirement in the mid 60s and told many stories about the club, the caddies and the working conditions for the staff. The cottage(now a ruin) on the east side of the railway was rented by the club as accommodation for the professional at an annual rent of £12

At the A.G.M. in 1923, it was decided to play the captain's prize on the Whit Monday. This was to continue for many years. The captain that year was L.M.Montgomery, better known throughout the country as the author, Lynn C. Doyle. (nicknamed Linseed Oil) He came to Skerries as Manager of the Northern Bank. It was also decided to award a silver spoon for winning a monthly medal. Some of these have come back into the possession of the club and are on display in trophy cabinets.

The penalty for out of bounds was distance only, which was generous by today's standards. In May, the bar remained open until 8.30pm on Sundays, a factor which must have made E.H.Bailey realise that change was happening quickly and irrevocably. The committee continued to support the professional by allowing him £4 expenses towards the Moran cup and the professional championship. This seems to have been a feature of the early club. Whenever the professional played a tournament his expenses were covered by the club. The committee decided to allow sheltering during rain and this decision must have been influenced by the complaint of the previous year involving W.Towell and R.T.Ross. In July, the membership list for ladies was temporarily closed and army officers were admitted without entrance fee. Another professional tournament was held on the course on the 9th of August, the results of which I was unable to find.

The club had sent £5 to the golfing section of the Aonach Tailteann in June 1922 and in 1924 it was decided that F.A.Moran should represent Skerries at the AGM. In February it was agreed to purchase a national flag for display on special occasions. This very significant step shows the club coming to terms with the many changes which were happening in the country itself at this time. The Irish Times of October 1909 carried an obituary to our then Vice President, Edward Hamilton Woods and in it stated "The cause of the Union always found in him a warm supporter". E.H.Woods would have been very representative of the membership of the club up to the end of the First World War. Now this was changing, and new members joining were helping to facilitate this change. The most prominent agent

for change was Dr.J.F.Owens, father of Gerry and Jack both of whom were to become captains. J.F. sen. had joined the club in 1913 and by the early 20s was serving his second term on committee.

Other members with connections to the present day club were H.E.Cashell(1916) Richard Branagan (1922),Michael Branagan, Bernard Healy, Dr.P.Healy, and J.Landy (1923). At the AGM. of 1925 J.F.Owens proposed 20 changes to the club rules. This must constitute a club record for one individual. He also got approval for a donation of £10 to the Vincent De Paul society and a reduction on bar and lunch prices. As a matter of information these were to be Soup+ Joint /Chop /Steak, 2s/- +tea, 2s/3d, +sweet 2s/6. The club saw the departure of the professional Dan O'Mahony and the appointment of his replacement, Dan Murray. Jack Fulham was paid extra money to supervise cars in the carpark, on foot of a complaint about damage to a car, and the club paid 10guineas to Cecil Barcroft, retiring Sec.of Royal Dublin, due to ill health, in appreciation for his help in laying out our course.

1926 saw the construction of the putting green in March. The difficulties the club had in dealing with the Insurance Company in the past were solved with the appointment of Coyle & Co. Insurance Brokers to handle all insurance matters. In May, the professional, Dan Murray was selected by the G.U.I. for the Pro Championship in England and was given £5 expenses. The most significant event however, was the appointment of Mr. A. Gorman as the first paid secretary of the club at an annual salary of £20. Problems were experienced with the cottage, which the club had rented in recent years resulting in the professional moving out.

The GUI. lobbied the Government strongly on the issue of bar hours and this brought fruition in the following year with the Intoxication Liquor and Club Registration Act of 1927. The committee continued to lobby the G.N.R. on the issue of trains stopping at the course and this led to an agreement on the construction of a platform in the next year. The platform was built on the Dublin (south) side of the bridge and entry to the course was through a gate in the hedge behind the 18th green. The minutes indicate that 1927 was quiet enough apart from the above. Trains were to stop during the winter months as well. Coyles organised third party risks for all members through the Scottish Union and National Insurance Company at a cost of 1d for members and 6d per 100 visitors. The ladies made several attempts to have cross-bunkers removed but without success. The club noted with regret the resignation of former captain, George T.Hamlet. Hamlet as mentioned earlier had served in the British Army during the War. He was a keen and popular golfer and played international rugby for Ireland.

In January 1928 the committee received an irate complaint from W.R. Bailey re. the condition of the course. Divots were not being replaced. This was another complaint to resurface over the century. More changes were proposed by J. F. Owens at the AGM. in February. A club flag was to be bought. Prizes were to be exhibited before play and cup replicas were to be awarded. Stout was to be reduced to 7d a bottle and finally singles competitions were to have two classes, scratch to 9 and 10 +. The Battersby Cup was returned and was made a perpetual trophy. The committee decided in March to fly the club flag from April to October and although they decided that its colours should be cerise and old gold, the one bought was red with the letters S.G.C. in gold letters. The GNR. issued special rail vouchers for club members. Weekday return was 2s/6d and Sunday return was 2s/= . It would appear that steel shafted clubs were the order of the day from June onwards and later in the year the Professional Dan Murray came into conflict with the committee as a result of an observed "proclivity towards the drink".

The first major drainage work done on the course was in January 1929 and was carried out by Mr. R. McCulloch. Ladies day was fixed for Tuesdays but this changed over the years and is now back to Tuesday again. It was decided to admit bank officials and clergy to the club without paying an entrance fee. The G.N.R. complained that trains were being delayed at the halt – I wonder why !!!!. The 2nd tee (9th) came fully into play and in December the new first green was under construction.

1930 - 1939

One of the major links to our club today was the appointment in February 1930, of Bill Kinsella as

professional and greenkeeper during the second year of captaincy of J.C.Gregg. An extra chore was that he had to lock the clubhouse at night-time. Bill was to spend the rest of his working life at the club, where he was respected not only as a golfer but as a thorough gentleman as well. He was given £10 expenses for the open in May. The AGM appointed accountants as auditors, reflecting the growing business side of the club. Competitions on Sundays were mooted but quickly withdrawn again, no doubt as a result of a withering stare from E.H.Bailey. It was the thin edge of the wedge as far as he was concerned, but it was to return again. In March there is mention of a Willwood Cup being played for and in May the new first green was opened. Sunday bar hours were extended again and under winter rules a ball could be teed up. The railway path needed attention and it was suggested that swing gates be placed at either end to stop cyclists and animals. Locked gates could not be considered as the path was now in use by the public for some years. The water hazard at the 6th(13th) was covered to a width of 30yds., and the ridges on the old 9th.(18th) were leveled at about 185 – 240yds. from the tee.

In July 1931 our most famous member and public figure, Sean Lemass, was elected and J.F.Owens shot a course record of 75. This was to last for one year only, for in June '32, G.H.Owens carded a 72. Over the following years, Owens Jnr. was to achieve a scratch handicap, win the Irish Close Championship, play for Ireland, and go on to become President of the Golfing Union Of Ireland and a member of the Royal and Ancient at St. Andrews. These achievements make him, the outstanding member of Skerries Golf Club for the century.

The club now introduced new score cards and the printing contract was awarded to Powell Press owned by the Branagan family. This arrangement was to last for over 40 years. Michael Branagan joined the club in 1923 and the family have had membership connections with the club ever since through sons Kevin, Victor, and Noel, grandchildren Mary, Peter and Michael and great grandchild Brian Leonard.

January '33 saw course wages being reduced and it was clear that some financial problems existed, because at the A.G.M. the accounts were questioned for the first time. It was decided to appoint an assistant Hon Sec. to help E.H.Bailey. The man chosen was his brother W.R. Bailey. A 1s/ levy was paid to the G.U.I. towards a championship fund. The black horse, which had served the course well for years, had to be slaughtered and a new one bought for £10 from James Rogan. The sheep were sold and it was decided not to restock. Two units for the Ransome mower were bought for £87 on the profits of the sale and the minutes record the word fairway for the first time. The club made several attempts to get the G.N.R. to reduce the return fare for members, but to no avail. During the summer months however the fares after 12pm. were 1st.class, 3s/; 2nd. 2s/4d.;and 3rd. 1s/9d.

In September the par for the course was set at 72. November saw the committee agreeing to Bill Kinsella having an assistant, Mr. Joe Carroll. It was also decided to check the Shannon Scheme (the E.S.B.) and assess the viability of getting electricity for the clubhouse. It was a matter of great regret that the committee recorded the death of T.S.F.X.Battersby, a founder member of the club, and donor of the Battersby cup.

To assist with the financial problems, the committee sent a delegation to meet Mr. Kirkpatrick, agent to Lord Holmpatrick, to request a reduction in the lease. In January of the following year Kirkpatrick requested a copy of the balance sheet, which showed a loss of £116-2s-11d. By March the club had paid the lease of £150, but were delighted to receive a donation of £30 by return. To tighten up on matters the club decided to introduce monthly stock taking and to raise money it was decided to run a sweepstake on the Epsom Derby. Tickets were to be 10s/= each or 2s/6d for a quarter share and each member to sell one book of ten tickets. E.H.Bailey complained about the poor quality of light afforded by the Aladdin lamps, in the hope of nudging the club towards electricity. The G.U.I. issued a rule to all clubs that the Captain's prize should not exceed £10 in value and Skerries went one further by placing its own limit of £5. The ladies made it known that they no longer wanted spoons for prizes and requested vouchers instead. Monthly medals were in two classes 0—15; and 15 +, with a box of 6 golf balls given as class prizes.

The railway path became a serious issue throughout the year 1934 with the club and the GNR exchanging many letters. The club had paid a considerable sum of money towards the construction of the path. Over the years the public had begun to treat it as a right of way, much to the annoyance of

the committee. As far back as 1916 the club had placed locks on the gates at either end. These were removed during "the troubles". This is the only reference to the 1916 rising and the aftermath. While there is considerable mention of the War, the troubles are totally ignored. The GNR refused to agree to any locks, or permanent obstructions being placed by the golf club and so the matter was not resolved to anybody's satisfaction. One slightly amusing incident occurred when Mrs. Flanagan, mother of Leo, complained that she had fallen from her bicycle on the railway path as a result of a collision with a dog. She received no sympathy from the captain G.E.Ellis or committee, who informed her that she should not have been cycling on the path in the first place.

The assistant professional J.Carroll was entered for professional tournaments and a new mare was purchased for the sum of £19 + the black mare as a 'trade in.' The sum of £2 guineas was donated to Fr. Meeghan towards the church fund on foot of a request from the Skerries Sports Committee.

In August 29th, another professional tournament was held at the club. The editors of the Irish Times, Independent, Press and Drogheda Independent were invited as guests. The first prize of £10 was won by P.J.Mahon of Royal Dublin with a score of 141 (72+69). Joint second with scores of 143 were W.Nolan (74+69) and J.Cassidy (75+68). The first 18 holes was won by A.J.Ward with 71, while the second 18 was won by Bill Kinsella with 72. In September G.H.Owens was cut to scratch and the age for juveniles was extended to 18 yrs. Bill was reminded that caddies must be over 16 yrs. of age. The plans for clubhouse extension were agreed and sent out to tender. The builders who tendered were P. Mathews, M.Derham, and J.Duff. from Skerries, J.Rooney from Balbriggan, and J.McCready from Malahide

At the AGM. in 1935, E.H.Bailey was elected Captain, Hon Sec and Hon Treas and this was to be his last year on committee. G.H.Owens again suggested Sunday competitions but withdrew the proposal, as it was divisive on the night. Although E.H.Bailey again stated his views on the matter, P.J.Reddy successfully proposed that these competitions would be part of the club fixture list for 1936. Thus a compromise was reached and accepted by the meeting. In March two new club flags were bought and railway sleepers were acquired to fence the grazing area for the horse. By May a tender of £330 was accepted from J. Browning for the extension of the clubhouse.

A subscription list was opened for Bill Kinsella's marriage and £29-14s-0 was raised. A new competition involving a member playing the professional was initiated. The cost to the member was 2s/6d and the winners would play matchplay for a suitable prize. A break in at the club lead to the arrest of the culprit and he was sentenced to two months in jail or leave the Free State. He chose the latter.

In September G.H.Owens was selected for Ireland and E.H.Bailey informed the committee that after the end of the year, he would no longer act as an officer of the club. The Aladdin lamps in the bar were replaced by Tilly suspension lamps to improve the lighting and a proper ventilation system was put in the roof.

Although 1936 seemed a quiet year one or two events are worth noting. A notice board for captains was first exhibited in the clubhouse in January and at the A.G.M. in Moran's Hotel, E.H.Bailey left the committee for good. He had served as Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the club from October 1905 to December 1935 inclusively and although there was genuine sorrow that he felt obliged to resign, the club simply moved on and embraced the changes that were inevitable. Sunday competitions had arrived to stay. The influence of G.H.Owens on both course and administration was to become very evident over the following years. Trees were purchased and were planted between the 1st and 9th (18th) holes.

In August Mr. E. Montgomery was appointed Secretary/ Manager of the club at a salary of £42 per annum plus rail travel. 'Monty' always carried a small attaché case and this gave him a very businesslike appearance. In fact he used it for the storage of 'Baby Powers'. His unwritten arrangement with the club allowed him a free Baby Power a day. His habit of exceeding his ration was a source of constant irritation to Minnie Evans, who had to balance the wine and spirit book. A dance was held in the Metropole Ballroom to raise funds. This was to be the first of many such functions.

In October the committee was relieved to learn that the county surveyor did not require any land for

road building, and in November the GUI. urged all golf clubs to review their insurance policies. The AGM. in 1937 decided to hold future meetings in the clubhouse. This conflict of venues seems to have occurred as a result of a growing division between Dublin and Skerries members, and emerged frequently when choosing meetings or dances for fundraising. The audited report for the year showed a surplus of income over expenditure of £127. It was also decided to exhibit prospective members for the first time by placing their names on the notice board for 14 days before election.

In March, further extensions to the clubhouse were carried out by Mr. Paddy Mathews who had successfully tendered a price of £200 for the work. The club purchased its first tractor in May from a Mr. Murtagh for £210 and this led to the sale of the horses for £9 and £27/10s. Alternating was introduced on the first tee in July and a highlight for the captain, A.F. Byrne was that another professional tournament was held in August. In December, the 3rd (10th) green was altered and in the clubhouse the bar and dining room were brought up to "first class fashion". Bill Kinsella requested that his brother-in-law, Seamus Mc Gealy be appointed as his assistant and this was approved in January 1938

The A.G.M. of '38 was significant in that Sean Lemass was elected captain and the meeting unanimously elected E.H. Bailey as Vice-President, an honour which he politely but firmly declined. The staff in the bar were instructed on the correct method of pouring stout and bass, while on the course the paddock, now no longer required for the horses, was cleared to make our practice ground. Although Sunday competitions were now in play, the club was able to grant outings on those days, between 10.00am and 12.30pm. This was short lived and by August they were dropped. The ladies section was closed at 100 members and they were not allowed to play on Saturdays between 2pm. and 5pm. The Lady Secretary took exception to this and ignored the rule. She was suspended from the club and only reinstated when she apologised.

On the administration side of things, a finance committee was appointed to approve payments. Order books were introduced for all purchases and the insurance cover on the clubhouse was increased from £1800 to £2100. A cash register was placed in the bar. The skylight, which became a feature of the old clubhouse, was installed in August. The annual dinner was held in the Gresham Hotel in Dublin and the cost of the tickets was 10s/-. There was some friction between the sec./manager "Monty" and Bill Kinsella over the chain of command and the giving of instructions to course staff. This was another problem that would resurface again and again over the century. Bill had his own personal success that year, when he was selected to play for the Irish Professional team against England. December saw further course drainage and the erection of a practice net. As a result of many complaints about the 'arctic' conditions in the locker room, the committee installed an anthracite stove there.

In the last year of the decade, 1939, the GUI. issued instructions to all clubs, to the effect, that no club should accept cups from business concerns. A matter of contention for the committee was that the cottage which the club had rented for the professional was condemned by the Dublin Board of Public Health. This led to a short dispute between the club and Mr. B. Healy, but this was settled amicably in April with the help of G.L. McGowan. Bill found himself the focus of attention when, on a Saturday, the shop was unattended. He was at a football match in Bray. The caddies were now graded into two classes. Class 1 caddies were paid 10d for 9 holes, 1s/6d for 18; 2s/6d for 27; and 3s/6d for 36. In class 2 the payments were 7d for 9; 1s/1d for 18; 2s/= for 27; and 2s/8d for 36 holes. In the case of 27 or 36 holes being played, lunch had to be provided.

The most important club event of 1939, and the greatest achievement by any member then or since, was the winning of the Irish Close championship by G.H. Owens. Having been frustrated by the great Jimmy Bruen on the two previous years. Gerry beat him in Rosses Point and went on to take the title that year. The captain, Sean Lemass, and committee met to consider a suitable way of celebrating the event, and it was decided to hold a dinner in his honour. On the course, it was agreed to construct a new 8th. green and this was completed just in time, because in October all extra work on the course was suspended due to World War 2.

One item of interest was the election of Miss Ina Halpin as lady secretary. Ina was still very much involved in the running of things for the ladies when I joined the club, and she was regarded as a lady of great courtesy in all her dealings with everyone, and it is worth recording, that she was a marvellous representative for the ladies' section. As a final note to the thirties, I am reliably informed

by a very senior member, that a fun competition was held annually. In this, the men dressed in women's clothes and shots were added to the score if any item of clothing was adjusted by the participants during the round--- makes you wonder at the type of member we had then. Another very senior member, however, contends that no such event took place and that the whole thing was a figment of the imagination.

1940 - 1949

With the war affecting most aspects of life, the club was delighted to receive a letter from the Dept. of Agriculture, granting exemption from the Emergency Powers (no.12) order of 1939 on the cultivation of land. This effectively meant that the club's playing of golf would not be interrupted. There is little doubt that the presence of Sean Lemass as a member was a major factor here. Permission was given to B.Healy to graze sheep on the course between Monday and Friday and ladies day was moved to Monday.

In March the committee received a complaint about the behaviour and language of a member in the bar. The matter was dealt with informally and quickly. This was in sharp contrast to a similar incident in 1907 when a prominent member found himself in trouble over buying his guest a pint of whiskey on a Sunday and behaving in a drunken manner. E.H.Bailey's letter to the offending member contained the classic, "I am directed to inform you that should the committee not receive an ample apology from you, I am instructed to request your resignation". The reply from the member, when it came, contained an abject apology, and with regard to the embarrassment caused, stated that "nobody was more embarrassed than I"

Golf balls were now a scarce commodity and were for sale in the bar for the time being. Caddies were finding the going tough as well. They sought an increase in fees, even threatening to strike, but this was refused by the committee, who reacted to the threat by instructing them to stay off the verandah and not to play after 10am. Members were also instructed not to give tips for the duration of the dispute. The Hon Sec. Vincent O'Callaghan, who had succeeded E.H.Bailey, resigned and was replaced by P.J.Reddy, father of lady member Marjorie. He was to remain in that office until 1949, when he was succeeded by P.J.Griffin.

In August '40 agreement was reached with the E.S.B. to supply electricity to the club for two years at a cost of £30 per annum. The tender for the wiring of the clubhouse was accepted from P.L.Flanagan, better known to us as Leo. Mole draining was carried out on the 2nd (9th), 3rd (10th), and 9th (18th) by Mr. Mc Cullough in October, and lockers were made and erected by a member, Mr. Bill Woodcock, father of former captain Joe, and grandfather of members Donal, Colm, Rory and Aiden. Bill was a wily competitor on the golf course but was better known as a veteran of the 1916 Rising in which he served with De Valera in Boland's Mills. The committee received a complaint to the effect that a member refused to play golf with another member with whom he had been drawn, and while apologies were exchanged, this type of complaint would resurface again over the following decades.

In 1941 sheep were allowed again if they did not affect the wheat in the paddocks (part of the practice ground) The ladies requested, at the March meeting, that the club would run a mixed foursomes for the Soldier's Comfort Fund. Not alone did this find favour, but it was enthusiastically supported by Sean Lemass. The biggest problem that year seems to have been the failure of the club to purchase a cooker. Even the E.S.B. could not supply one.

In September a competition was held for caddies, and the best two, D.Potter and R.McGealy, went on to represent Skerries at Clontarf G.C. in the Leinster Caddies Competition. D.Potter finished second in the senior event with a score of 81 while R.McGealy also finished second in the junior event (to Christy Greene) with a score of 82. They were both beaten by one shot. The committee decided to approach the GNR again with a view to erecting a halt on the upside of the railway line. This approach was successful and in March the following year, an agreement was reached whereby the halt would be built at a cost to the club of £100. This halt was built on the Skerries (north) side of the bridge and was accessed by the railway path. Most members simply walked across the railway line itself, particularly at night when they were in a hurry. The station master at Skerries would ring the club when the last

train was leaving the station and this gave the members those precious minutes to finish their drinks.

1942 saw a deficit in the accounts, principally because of the purchase of lockers and electricity. The club planted potatoes for its own use further down the practice ground. At the AGM, P.J.Reddy was elected captain, Hon Sec, and Hon.Treas. in the one year. Both he and E.H.Bailey had the distinction of holding three offices at the same time. To make up for the scarcity of golf balls, Bill Kinsella was paid a bonus of £10. To raise money for the halt, a sweep was run on a race in the Phoenix Park.

The committee had to deal with a fairly serious complaint in April when it emerged that three very prominent members, including one who was to become captain, had caused considerable damage to the bar in a fit of 'high jinks'. The matter was settled when the members in question agreed to pay for all damages. One of the gentlemen submitted his resignation, but was persuaded to withdraw it. It would be amusing to speculate how the incident would have been handled by today's committee or indeed by E.H.Bailey.

The club was in a position in September to hire out the tractor at a fee of £25 per month, but the arrangement it had with the Holmpatrick estate, by which £30 was allowed off the lease, was placed in jeopardy in November, when the committee received a letter from Lady Holmpatrick, stating that this allowance could not continue. Lord Holmpatrick was quite ill at the time, and it was, sadly, no surprise, that the minutes of February '43 recorded his death. This ended the association between the Holmpatricks and the club, and at the AGM. J.S.Griffin was elected President, and S.F.Lemass was elected Vice-President. J.S.Griffin had been captain on three occasions, ('10,'18, and '28) a feat later accomplished by G.H.Owens. The effects of the war were taking their toll, and societies were told to bring their own supplies of rationed food. Strangely enough this did not affect the social side of the club. The clubhouse thrived with so many members staying in Skerries for their holidays. Discussions and endless arguments were the order of the day.

On one occasion a row broke out over Dev's role in the Treaty talks and the Civil War. It became so heated that order had to be restored by a very senior member stating that the discussion was becoming like the Portugese Parliament, all talkers and no listeners. There and then it was decided to have all future debates run on parliamentary lines. A speaker was appointed and he had to wear a proper gown and wig. Members were elected by being allowed to buy drinks for the bar. This meant that it was important to be elected as early as possible. It also meant that the speaker did not have to buy drink for the whole summer. The Skerries Portugese Parliament became quite famous and other clubs attempted to copy it but without success. The phrase 'Are you a member' was frequently used and a master of the rolls was appointed to ensure that all present were fully 'paid up' and correctly elected. Permission to speak was granted by the speaker, and to get his attention one had to buy him a bottle of stout. The fun lasted for a season or two and many excellent and noisy debates were held and in some cases trials were conducted.

Another horse was bought for the course, but like many decisions, it was a short term one, because by September, the horse was sold again. In the clubhouse as Miss Minnie Evans approached retirement, Miss Janie Sherwin who had been her assistant for a number of years, was selected to replace her. Miss Evans had been with the club from the very beginning, and was very popular with the committee and members alike. It was a matter of great sadness when two years later in June '45 her death was recorded.

In May of '43 a highlight for the captain P.R.Fanning was that the club reached the final of the Barton Cup for the first time, but was unsuccessful, being beaten by Woodbrook. Bill Kinsella was given more say in course matters and in deciding the par of the course. It was at this time that Rush Golf Club requested the assistance of Bill in the layout of their course. This was readily given and it appears that the club also assisted the local Hockey Club, by helping them with their pitch. The end of the year brought a letter of complaint from Mr. Coleman, a neighbouring farmer, that members were trespassing on his land. This was another type of complaint which was to arise again and again over the decades.

In Janury '44 the club decided to hold scotch foursomes to assist in the preparation for the Barton Cup, probably, as a result of their near-success of the previous year. At the AGM. the J.S.Griffin Cup was adopted for play. However a most remarkable event happened at that meeting. The committee

had proposed an increase on the subscription, and this was, by all accounts, very unpopular. There was much heated debate and it looked as if the proposal would be defeated, when suddenly Dr Pat McGowan and G.H.Owens spoke passionately and eloquently, to the effect that the increase was not enough and should be doubled. It speaks volumes for these two gentlemen to record that their amendment was carried. This incident was a matter of great hilarity amongst the membership, when I joined the club, and was seen as a great example of the fickle nature of members at a general meeting.

Serious efforts were now made to explore the possibility of purchasing the land (Hacketstown) from the Holmpatrick Estate and for most of the rest of the year, a large volume of correspondence was exchanged between the club and the agent Mr. Kirkpatrick, who actually asked the club to make an offer. It is quite surprising, if not astonishing, therefore, that this part of the course was not bought until ten years later.

Clubhouse plans were also receiving attention and the Northern Bank confirmed that they would support the committee's proposals for these and the course purchase if imminent. The minutes recorded that there were problems with stopping trains in September but there were no details. The committee decided, in November, to have a proper agenda for all its future meetings.

The A.G.M. of 1945 approved the clubhouse reconstruction plans, and the work was to be carried out by Mr.David McIlvenna. In March, an electric fence was placed around the 5th (12th) green, and another professional tournament was approved for the 15th of July. This was won by Harry Bradshaw with Bill Kinsella in second place. What was unusual about this tournament was that the organizing committee wanted to announce the result with Harry Bradshaw still on the course and Bill leading in the clubhouse. The 'Brad' had been playing badly and it was felt that he had no hope of winning. Bill insisted on waiting however and Harry duly arrived and won, and with a twinkle in his eye, he 'accused' the club of trying to pull a fast one. April saw the death of the president J.S.Griffin, and as stated earlier, Miss Minnie Evans died in June. The committee made one more effort to persuade E.H.Bailey to allow his name to go forward for Presidency at the next A.G.M. He again declined, as was expected and the matter ended there.

In May the new Balbriggan Golf Club borrowed our triple mower and, wouldn't you know, when they returned it, it was damaged, and they didn't even offer to pay for repairs. An auction sweep was held on the captain's prize, and this practice was to continue until the late sixties. For years this auction, conducted by Paddy Fanning, was one of the highlights of the year. He had a crack about everyone he auctioned and wasn't too particular about his comments.

The club supply of stout was now purchased from Frank Glennon, father of present member Jim who is a Senator and former international rugby player. Ladies were allowed to use the bar during the clubhouse reconstruction, and Miss Sherwin was appointed as the club steward, replacing Miss Evans. While the committee was still hoping to buy the land, a new lease was agreed at a cost of £150 p.a. It was decided to purchase a piano and estimates were received from Mr.Mc.Cullough, Mr.Piggott and Mr.Kent. At the end of the year the captain's board was moved into the dining room.

S.F.Lemass became president of the club in 1946 and chaired the Annual General Meeting. Up to this the Captain of the club chaired all such meetings. This new arrangement was made part of the Club Constitution in 1951 and remains in practice today.

A group of Balbriggan members was entertained unofficially in the club in February and it was decided to make the fixture official for May. The format agreed was a surprise mixed, with Skerries men playing with Balbriggan women, and Skerries women playing with Balbriggan men --- the mind boggles at the fun they must have made of it. Mats were fitted in the bar, and they were still a feature of that room in the seventies. They were purchased from Mountjoy Jail. Although the war had ended, golf balls were still scarce in the club.

A serious row broke out between the committee and the sec/manager 'Monty' in January '47. When he threatened to resign, he was told to put it in writing. A month later he had changed his mind and submitted an apology in writing. This was accepted, and the committee stated its confidence in him. Improvements to the car park were carried out by the placing of 200 tons of rubble on it. While the

club was still exploring the possibility of buying the course, some land to the south of it, Piercetown, became available, and the committee entered into correspondence with the owners Portland Cement. It was to take another 18 months before the purchase was completed for £600.

This was the year that Fred Daly won the British open, and the club agreed to be associated with a presentation to him, on foot of a letter from Balmoral G.C. In June the committee decided that, in future, there would be a secret ballot when new members were being elected. On the course, dogs were causing a major problem for golf balls, and the electric fencing motor was stolen. The ridges on the 9th (18th) continued to receive attention, when more levelling was carried out in October.

1948 seems to have been a relatively quiet year in terms of events taking place, but one or two things are worth a mention. Margins were placed in the minute book, with sub-headings for easier access. I found this a great help when reading the minutes, and I owe it all to Leo Flanagan, who proposed it. P.J.Griffin was elected to committee in March, and it was to be a long association with the club. Paddy was to go on to be the second longest serving Hon Sec. of the club with two stints, 1949-'58, and 1963-'83. He also served as captain and vice-president.

Silver dessert spoons were acquired for monthly medal competitions, and the captain's board had wings added to it, as the cost of a new one was considered too expensive. A member, who shall be nameless, commented wryly, "Tis a pity it didn't help some of them to fly away". In August caddies were given armbands to wear. A red one denoted first class, and yellow denoted second class. By the end of the year the club had made a firm offer of £600 for the land, owned by Portland Cement, and the car park was completed.

In January '49 Portland Cement accepted the club's offer. Green gates were added to the car park, and at the AGM, P.J.Griffin was elected Hon.Sec. and Treas. The new field was leased to M.Coleman for the time being and a new Tricolour and club flag were approved. In April thefts from the locker room were noted, and this was a problem that would recur several times. The committee decided it was time to review the club rules and a sub-committee was set up to do so. Card playing was, by all accounts, very much part of the social scene in the club, and continued to be so until the nineties when it died out for a variety of reasons. The extent of the gambling can be gauged from the committee's decision in June, to purchase screens for the bar. These were to be used to keep the poker school private.

Many stories are told about the playing of cards in the club. My favourite, as told by Dr. Frank Healy, involved a former captain, Fred Hyder, who was an excitable and unsuccessful poker player. On one of the few occasions, when he had a winning hand, a ball, intended for the 18th green, crashed through the bar window. The rest of the card school, alarmed and frightened by the noise and flying glass, promptly picked up their money and ran, leaving the hapless Fred still seated, clutching his winning hand, and shouting at them all to come back and finish the game.

It wasn't unknown for the odd train to be 'delayed' at the halt while a game or two of cards finished. This was accommodated by having the driver and the guard coming into the clubhouse for 'refreshments.' The end of the year witnessed Arbour day, when the club decided to plant 2000 trees on the 12th of November. The day itself seems to have been a social occasion and photographs were taken. The course was closed, and caddies paid to help. Shovels and spades were borrowed for the occasion, and each was labelled so as to return them to their rightful owners. The concept was repeated over the years. Another decision was the revival of a gold medal for the Spring championship, and in the bar uniforms were supplied to staff.

1950 - 1959

Gerry Owens continued as captain for 1950, and having completed the plantation of trees in the previous year, he now turned his attention to the new land. The plans for the new holes were agreed, and the 5th (12th) tee was made into a rockery. The money for this work was raised by the production of club Christmas cards. This was quite a lucrative project, and was carried on for some years. It was up to the captain of the year to select an appropriate picture for the cover and verse for

inside.

At the AGM in March, pavilion membership was established, and the fee was to be one guinea. It was also agreed to have a board for lady captains. Owens proposed a triangular tournament for Skerries, Balbriggan, and Rush, and although this was postponed, it did re-emerge some years later to become the Tailteann Shield.

In September a goat was found to be stabled in the tool shed, and there were some interesting exchanges between the committee and Bill Kinsella on the matter before the goat was evicted. It was a case of dejavu many decades later, when the exchanges between the club and Jimmy centred on a car and a motorbike.

There was a serious, yet amusing incident during the year. It involved two prominent members and a game of cards. One of these gentlemen was snoozing quite happily in the bar, and the other was involved in a game of cards. As it was a cold day, and there was no one else around, the wife of the card player was invited into the bar to sit at the fire, as the lounge was very cold. The 'sleeper' suddenly awoke, and seeing the lady present, cried out "Who let that woman into the bar?" The husband angrily replied, "How dare you call my wife a woman" and made a complaint to the committee. The incident dragged on with neither party giving way, but through the diplomatic skills of the captain, the offender was persuaded to apologise (albeit reluctantly) in the lounge. This was to be done by a handshake in front of all present. The offender was aware that the other gentleman had a bunion on his big toe, and so he walked up and in the act of shaking hands, deliberately trod on the bunion. A howl of pain followed and was followed by another apology. Honour was served, and Gerry Owens, in telling me the story, related how it was the subject of great hilarity for many years afterwards.

By November several special meetings were held to discuss the constitutional review, and finally it was agreed to bring it to a special general meeting in February '51. The sub committee which was responsible for the review consisted of Gerry Owens, Paddy Griffin and in particular Vincent Landy.

Vincent was one of the great characters of the club and was well liked by old and new members alike. His free legal advice was invaluable to the committee over the years and was always given in a calm and business like manner. He was very entertaining company in the bar, where he excelled in singing and winding up Flanagan. This was hilarious at times and very often left Leo in a state of apoplexy and threatening to sue. Vincent would continue to draw quietly on his pipe and add another barb.

I recall one Wednesday afternoon when it was too wet to play golf. The Wednesday Society golfers were in the lounge and started a sing song. Being newish members, the songs were the latest or about Dublin and were in full flow when I walked Vincent. He was immediately 'persuaded' to add a contribution. Not the slightest put out, he began his own favourite, 'Tit Willow', from The Mikado. This was not quite what the assembly was expecting, so a lot of shuffling and chat started. Vincent sang on regardless, when I walked Gero (Brendan Geraghty), who grabbed the singer by the shoulder and shouted 'Hard man Vincent'. Again not the slightest upset Vincent sang more sweetly and completed the song in a soft and long note. The crowd erupted in a roar and when this subsided, Vincent, with a grin on his face, shouted at them "I gave yez effin culture whether yez effin wanted it or not". Another cheer erupted.

The club motto and crest, which we still use, were adopted by the committee for inclusion in the club constitution. It is interesting to note that at the annual dinner, the toasts were, 'Ireland' by the captain, 'The President of Skerries Golf Club' also by the captain, and 'The Game of Golf'.

As expected, the club constitution was passed by a special general meeting in February 1951, and at the AGM in March, Leo Flanagan succeeded Gerry Owens as captain. Leo's captaincy was described at the next general meeting as the year of 'champagne and cigars', and this in many ways typifies the flamboyant nature of the man. The other side to the coin was that committee meetings rarely started on time. The worst case of that occurred in June, when the secretary/manager, who had organized a lift home, declared that he was leaving as it was 11pm. and the meeting had not started.

The major problem of the year was the difficulty the club experienced in trying to purchase Hacketstown (the old course). Much of this seemed to centre on the correspondence between the club

solicitor and the agent Mr. Kirkpatrick and the committee's response to this. A misunderstanding seems to have occurred when an offer of £5000 was reported to have been made. It would appear that the whole committee was not aware of this, and so some tensions arose. Thereafter for the rest of the year, the land purchase was a matter of great frustration, and it was to take two more years to resolve it.

A Vice-President's prize was introduced, and at first was confined to present and past committee members. A fund raising dance was held in the Pavilion ballroom in Skerries, and in the clubhouse a Sambros billiard table was bought and another was acquired on Hire-Purchase. The outside of the clubhouse was painted, and a wall was built behind it by J.Browne. A sample of a club blazer was introduced, and while the idea was accepted, the badge was rejected. A match with Donabate golf club was played in October, and seems to have been a 20 a side. On the course, the new land, Piercetown, was mole drained, and all the greens were pollforked by the members themselves. Another feature of the year was the growing number of 'misunderstandings' between the committee and Bill, and this was to continue through the following year.

When a stock-take was carried out on the bar in January 1952, it was found that quite a sizable amount of money was owed by some members. Stout that year was 9d per bottle. In order to keep the card school private, it was decided to let them use the office. On Saturdays, when no fixture existed, a competition for a prize of a pair of chickens was successfully proposed by Vincent Landy.

In February, the club received what can only be described as an amazing letter from the new representative of the Holmpatrick Estate in Ireland, wanting to know what the club wanted the land for. The mind boggles at the various answers one could give to that. Much of the committee business had been given to sub-committees in the previous year and this was expanded. A convenor was identified for each group.

In April the Moran Cup was held in Skerries, and in a postponed final, Harry Bradshaw beat Christy Greene 5&4. The most outstanding event of the year was the winning of the Barton Shield Leinster section. The team pairings were Gerry Owens & Mick Ferguson and Andy Byrne & Frank Webster. The team failed in the all Ireland semi-final but their achievement ranks as one of the fine club performances to date in inter-club competitions. Members were required to buy brass plates for their lockers, and these were still in place when I joined the club in 1971. Proposal forms for new members now had to show their profession. In October, Frank Webster won the Leinster scratch cup, at Carlow. The out of bounds on the 9th (18th) was abolished and the only restrictions placed on ladies playing golf was from 1pm—5pm on Saturdays.

A decision was made, in January 1953, to have the club minutes bound, and this, coupled with a similar decision many years later by former captain Edmond Sheeran, has helped to maintain the club records in excellent condition, and very accessible for research purposes. Another harbour day was held in March, and in May it was decided to play the captain's prize in three balls. As a result of his outstanding achievements as Ireland's leading Amateur Golfer, J.B.Carr was elected an Honorary Life Member. Balbriggan were back again in June, and this time they were looking for Bill Kinsella to give golf lessons on Thursday evenings, and this the committee granted. The land question came up for discussion again, and this time it was thought that the services of Mr. Blood-Smith would be used, as legal adviser. A lease was to be sought temporarily, while negotiations would commence, with a view to purchase.

Another professional tournament was arranged for the 29th of September, and this time it was sponsored by Prescotts. The event was well advertised at the Pavilion, at Butlins, and at Red Island. An organizing sub-committee produced an excellent day, which included tents for starting and hospitality, flags and bunting in the clubhouse environs, and carparking facilities on Healy's land. The event was won by Christy Kane of Royal Dublin, and runner up was Fred Daly. Interestingly Sean Kinsella caddied for the winner, while Jimmy caddied for Fred. Des Cashell acted as 'marker' for Fred and he, Jack Flanagan and Fred had many Gin and Tonics afterwards as Fred had a pulled muscle in his back. Harry Bradshaw had one bottle of stout. The practice ground was expanded by cutting down 5 trees, and the committee was made aware of the availability of sand at the Ballast pit

1954 started with a problem with the extension of the lease. The committee decided to approach

Mr. David Ganly with a view to resolving the matter, and this approach was successful. The members were informed in March, that Lord Holmpatrick had agreed to sell at a price of £3,500 + costs. The price was to be paid in gilt edge securities, which would earn for the estate, the equivalent of the lease. This was accepted by the club on the proposal of Gerry Owens, the seconder being Leo Flanagan.

The ladies were granted a Saturday for a fancy dress white elephant competition. This competition was for prizes which nobody wanted. The position of Sec./Manager was before the committee for review. It is clear from the minutes, that things were not going well. The committee felt that retirement was the right option, but as the months passed, this was not happening, so other options were considered. The matter was eventually resolved and at the AGM in the next year, the resignation was announced.

In June the course was inspected by an expert from the Bingly Co., and this association was to last until the 1970s, when Dr. Tom Kavanagh took over as our course adviser. Junior competitions were initiated. The eventual purchase of the land was completed later in the year, and 10 year memberships were made available, to raise money for the project. Jimmy Kinsella won the Leinster Boy's championship and the club made a presentation of £7-10s to him to mark the occasion.

At the AGM in 1955, there were strong words for the committee from a future captain, Mr. Ernie Tucker. It was the first time that this occurred in the minutes. I'm pretty sure that all general meetings weren't all sweetness and light, but nothing of a confrontational nature had happened up to this. The whole issue of the secretary's position was clarified, and his resignation was declared to have been tendered at the end of December '54. The committee then proceeded, successfully, to have the resigned secretary, Mr. E. Montgomery, elected an Honorary Life member.

Monty, as he was known, had been a member from the old days, before he was appointed secretary. In his new role he was something of a formidable individual, and I am informed by Niall Weldon that he was feared by many members, very often for the wrong reasons. He was seen as far too strict, in the way he carried out his duties, with or without the committee's authority. Niall recalls seeing him castigate a member for not wearing proper golf shoes, and ordering him off the course. He obviously had another side to his nature, because a story I heard when I joined the club, was that he was persuaded by a lady member, to give her son his bottle, as he lay in his pram outside Monty's office, when she was playing golf. In another incident, Monty announced the result of a fourball competition before Gerry Owens and Frank Healy had completed their round with what would have been the winning score. A heated but amusing exchange of views was aired, and to the enjoyment of all in the bar, Gerry called Monty an effin Black and Tan.

In March the committee recorded with great sadness, the death of P.J. Reddy, who had served as captain, Hon Sec., and Hon Treas. At the end of the month the final cheque for the land was passed. The very final figure was £2849-2s-1d. and this, when you consider all that went before, was an excellent deal.

It was agreed to play the Gallagher Trophy in Skerries in the following year, and a new competition for handicaps 16 and over was suggested for North Leinster. This would later be the Newsam Cup. In its first year Skerries reached the final and were beaten by Bellinter Park (Royal Tara). Members selected, had to entertain their opponents. The fixture card was to be white with a maroon and gold crest, and the trustees were informed that they could no longer attend committee meetings, under the new rules. Whether this was a matter of contention or not is not clear, but it seems strange that they had to be informed of the rules. In the clubhouse, restrictions were placed on access to the kitchen, and this problem occurred again and again.

In August the club advertised for a steward and wife. The appointment, however, was to take a long time, as quite a few people came and went over the next year. The reasons for this were varied. Some felt that the pay was inadequate, while others felt that the working conditions were too difficult. With the club now 50 years in existence, a Jubilee dinner was held in the Pavilion ballroom in October. It was decided to run a Jubilee hamper competition for the Christmas week, and in November, Donabate, Rush, and Balbriggan golf clubs were invited to participate in all the open competitions, which were to be run from January to March '56, as part of the Jubilee celebrations.

It is clear that the majority of events to mark the Jubilee were to take place in 1956. The first idea was to play a game of golf in 1905/06 clothes. As the golf course was officially opened in April 1906, it was agreed to have a Jubilee week from the 16th to the 23rd. of that month. Bill Kinsella was made an Honorary member for the year, and the club's most outstanding golfer, Gerry Owens, was elected captain. Another significant event was the election of P.J.Owens to the office of Hon. Treas. It was to be the first time that the office of Hon Treas. was to be separated from the office of Hon.Sec. and this has remained so to this day. On the Jubilee day itself, the President, Sean Lemass, was piped to the first tee, to officially drive off. A caddy was paid £1 to retrieve the ball. The competition was a mixed fourball, with ladies playing off the men's tees. They were given 9 extra shots on their handicaps to compensate for this. A reception was held in the clubhouse at 8 o'clock. The Jubilee dinner for August that year had to be cancelled due to the death of the wife of the captain, Gerry Owens.

The Tailteann Shield made its first appearance in June, with Skerries playing Rush in a mixed foursomes (8 pairs). Again there seemed to be problems with keeping a steward in the clubhouse. The latest one was dismissed due to a "proclivity for drink". The matter was resolved eventually when the committee appointed Mrs. Hirell to run the kitchen and Mrs. Farrell to run the bar. On the course there was a minor problem with members taking cuttings from the rockery at the 5th (12th). I remember the same problem arising in recent years when the very same rockery, beautifully restored by Ronan Early, proved too much a temptation for some of our 'golfers'.

At the end of the year, a new secretary, Ms. Nessie Bergin, was appointed, and the minutes became more detailed. The Hon Sec. agreed to carry on for the next year, but turned down an honorarium. The club agreed to compete in a quiz against the sailing club, and a competition was organized to raise money for Hungarian relief. It was also decided that the Xmas cards should carry a photograph of the first captain, Anthony Hussey driving off. Finally it was agreed to hold an open week in the following year from the 5th. to the 12th.of July.

In January 1957 petrol was again a problem, and this increased the importance of the train timetable. Catering still seemed to be a problem, and it was poorly supported. Another arbour day was organized, and 700 trees were planted. It was agreed to allow juniors to play in stated competitions. The annual audit in February showed that the finances were not good, and at the AGM, there was a lot of criticism from both auditors and members. There had been 4 changes of staff, 14 people in the bar, and 2 robberies, and on top of that the club was not being supported. All in all, the Jubilee had not been such a great year, from the administration point of view. To assist matters, the tractor was to cut down on the manual hours required on the course, and a future captain and Hon Sec. Ivan Counihan, volunteered to bottle and label 5 gallons of London Gin. The annual meeting elected 5 people to life membership, including Bill Kinsella. In April a successful sweep was run, and the auditors advised on the prevention of pilferage in the bar. The practice of ladies cashing their vouchers in the bar was stopped.

With all that was going on, the Hon. Treas. offered to resign, but this was not accepted, and the club went on to tighten up on its procedures. Delivery dockets had to be signed etc. Later Ms. Bergin was asked to furnish monthly trading accounts to the committee. The ladies helped in the kitchen and some men assisted in the bar, but even with that, there was still a problem with the collection of money that was owed for meals.

The amateur versus the professional competition was revived and this time, a member could play either Bill or Jimmy. In August, Radio Eireann decided to run its Brains Trust programme in the club, and Leo Flanagan, Vincent Landy, and Ivan Counihan were selected to speak. Bar billiards were still being played, as the minutes show that the club sold 3 tables to Frank Murray and bought two in return. Frank was father of former captain Johnny. Committee meetings were now to be held on the 1st Friday of the month and an agenda was to be available four days in advance. The out of bounds at the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th was dropped, and it was decided to propose S.F.Lemass for Honorary Life membership at the next AGM. The minutes of December record with regret the death of E. Montgomery, better known to all as Monty.

1958 was a quiet year as far as the minutes are concerned, and was spent mainly in getting the club finances back on track, and when this was finally achieved, the captain Sammy Lyons was given great credit for accomplishing the task. A new pump was installed, and on the course a new gang mower

was acquired. In the bar a blank cheque book was installed. This helped to ensure that a shortage of money or a lapse in memory in bringing some, could now be accommodated. This system was in operation right up to July 1976.

At the AGM. the Hon Sec. resigned and Ivan Counihan was elected to the office. The highlight of the year was the final of the Barton Cup, in which Skerries played Portmarnock, and again lost. The team was 1.K.O'Flanagan & M.O'Flanagan. 2.R.Mc.Gealy & Terry McDonald 3.G.H.Owens & A.Ward 4.W. Kinsella Jnr.& M.Quirke and 5. F.Webster & C. Byrne. It was agreed to allocate a car parking space to the club captain in September, and the club suffered a mild embarrassment when hosting the Tailteann Shield. The committee overlooked the tradition of inviting the directors of the Tailteann Theatre Co. to the dinner afterwards.

In February 1959 Mona Farrell resigned from the bar and was replaced by June Manson. At the AGM Leo Flanagan replaced Dr.P.W.McGowan as vice- president, Gerry Owens was elected trustee, and Mick Winterson became Hon.Treas. The captain that year was Paddy Hardy. Paddy was a neat dresser and enjoyed the social side of the club. He was quite an accomplished pianist and provided the backing for many a late sing-song. He was very friendly with the famous singer Joseph Locke, who visited the club regularly and often performed for those present. There was a story that Locke had been refused membership but there is no record of that in the minutes. However, it is alleged that the reason the application was not made was due to a former captain and prominent member at the time, stating publicly in the bar that he would be objecting strongly to any such application.

In April the club purchased 60 prize bonds, and at the committee meeting in June an old problem arose when the meeting had not started by 10pm. Further edicts were issued to the effect that no drink was to be consumed in the kitchen, and that, yet again, it was out of bounds.

The club decided to invite a fourball to try to set a nw course record. It was made up of Joe Carr, Noel Fogarty, Tom Craddock, and Jack Caldwell. The event, which took place on Sun 13th of September, and carried an admission charge of 2s/6d, was successful, with Tom Craddock shooting a 67, to beat the amateur record by 4 strokes, and the professional one by 2. Another important entry in the minutes is the recording of the club's pleasure at the office of Taoiseach of Ireland, being occupied by the club president Sean Lemass. As all know Lemass was regarded by many as an outstanding Minister and Taoiseach, and it is to his credit that he never allowed the heavy burden of his political office to interfere with his life at the golf club. He enjoyed his golf and his fourball was renowned for the wagers involved. Niall Weldon told me that he had played in it once to fill a vacancy and that the bustling was of a high quality. Lemass was known to be a keen gambler and once he rode a bicycle up the steep slope of the first tee to win a bet of half a crown.

The committee agreed to supply stewards for the Dunlop Masters, which was held in Portmarnock. By the end of the year another burglary was noted, but this time no claim was submitted.

1960 - 1969

For the first half of the 60s, the minutes are brief, to a point where decisions only are recorded, and so it is difficult to get a flavour of how the club was going. However the two most significant events of the decade were the winning of the Barton Cup and the decision to become an eighteen hole course

In January 1960 the 7th hole was moledrained, and in the next month Skerries agreed to steward a hole at the Canada Cup in Portmarnock. The practice of the ladies helping in the kitchen was discontinued, and in this the name of Nellie Hamill was prominent. Nellie was a formidable woman, and was still so when I joined the club. She took it upon herself to let everyone, especially new members, know their place. She could stare and speak imperiously, and this would work for her most of the time. However I recall an occasion on the course when her "way" backfired on her.

I was playing the 9th on a Tuesday, and glancing over towards the 13th, I saw a senior member, who didn't take his golf too seriously, strolling, and being nudged along by his caddy. The member, whose son Peter is a current member and accomplished guitarist, was enjoying the day as much as

the golf. He had just negotiated the down slope on the 13th, when he was addressed in a very officious tone by Nellie, who pointed to him, that he had no business being on the course on ladies' day. The member, wasn't the slightest put out, and staring at her for some time, gave the measured reply, laced with colourful language, that she and her friends should be at home cooking for their husbands. The conversation ended abruptly.

Another character of our club, but for different reasons, appeared in May, when the committee employed Charlie Purcell, then stationed at Gormanston Camp, to work in the bar on weekends. Charlie's stay with the club was a long and mutually beneficial one. When he retired from the army, he became fully involved, to the point of becoming bar manager. He was highly regarded by all, especially our visitors, who always found him helpful and courteous. He came to be identified with Skerries, and enjoyed being called 'Mr. Skerries Golf Club'. He took great pride in being associated with the club itself and with each Captain with whom he worked and there is no doubt that his army training made him the ideal candidate for the job. His organisational skills were of the highest and I very much enjoyed our years working together. He had a great love of the horses and he missed few race meetings, especially Cheltenham. He always managed to get his face on the television screen and this caused much amusement back at the club.

In January 1961, June Manson departed from the bar, and a few months later, she was replaced by John Baxter. At the AGM, the Vice-President took the chair. Gerry Owens was elected a life member, and the category of country membership was introduced. The club decided to take part in the Uden Cup, and Nellie's polio week had its first outing. The clubhouse was renovated by J. Browne at a cost of £1100 and no golf clubs were allowed through the lounge. Outside a new well was bored on the present site and this gave the club an unlimited supply of water. A pump and pumphouse were added at a cost of £107, supplied by Lenihens of Capel St. The club minutes record the death in August of former captain Leslie Montgomery, who was better known throughout the country as the author Lynn Doyle.

At the AGM in 1962 David Ganley was elected an Honorary Life Member in appreciation for his help in the acquisition of the Hacketstown part of the course. Dempsey, Mullen & Co were appointed club auditors and this association is still in place. The captain's prize was moved from Whit Monday, a date it had occupied since the early years of club competitions, and a Vice-President's prize was introduced. It was, and is today, a scotch foursomes. John Baxter took over the catering, and members were asked not to bring children to the clubhouse. At the Xmas dinner the presidents and captains of Balbriggan and Rush golf clubs were invited.

Contention arrived with the holding of an EGM in December to raise the subscription from 7 guineas to 10 guineas. This was a large increase by any standard. The committee had decided to proceed with the supply of a watering system to the greens. Outings were also causing concern and it was decided to make the club more available to members, by reducing the number of green fees. The discussion which took place was long and heated, and many amendments were proposed, but in the end the full increase was carried by 31 votes to 26.

Ivan Counihan resigned as Hon Sec in 1963 and P.J.Griffin was elected to his second term in that office. He was to stay in that position until ill health forced him to take on an assistant in '83 (myself). Although he was unable to participate in club matters, he was kept informed of developments and enjoyed our twice-weekly briefings. Right up to his death, he was as avidly interested in all aspects of club life as he had always been. As well as being Hon Sec, he was also elected a Trustee of the club in '63. Nessie Bergin retired as secretary and was replaced by a Mrs. Breda Malone.

The land next to the club on the railway side was now owned by Joe Dowling and drainage of the railway ditch was shared by both parties. There were strong rumours that this land, owned by the Healys, had been offered to the club for £10,000, and that the club had turned it down. There is no record of this in the minute books of the club, but the rumour persists, and it is alleged that the decision not even to consider the purchase was taken in the bar by senior members of influence. Many club members felt that it was a great shame that a proposal was not brought to an EGM.

A couple of amusing stories that year, centred on the captain Ernie Tucker. In one he was playing in a fourball match which included Tom Noonan, father of present members Tom, Eileen and Margaret, as

an opponent. Tom Snr. had the honour at the 12th and managed to reach the green with his tee shot. Ernie, however hit his effort straight into the hole for a much celebrated ace. Tom sank his birdie putt and all proceeded to the 13th tee. As there was a little 'needle' in the match, it was something of an irritation for Ernie to find Tom taking the honour, so mustering as much annoyance as possible, he demanded to know why Tom was ignoring the rules of golf and went on to point out that it was his honour. Tom, clearly anticipating this, and enjoying its effect, calmly stated, that as he had a shot at the hole, his 2 was in fact a nett 1, and therefore halved the hole. He then proceeded to drive off. The effect this had on the captain was the cause of much amusement in the clubhouse.

In another story about the same man, Frank Healy told me, that it was the captain's custom to boil a kettle of water for tea, and while doing so Frank and others would be allowed to drink their stout in his company. As these gentlemen wished to consume as much stout as possible, the length of time the kettle took to boil was prolonged by regularly removing the plug from its socket.

Towards the end of the year the practice ground was defined by a line from the green shed to the ladies' 9th tee (18th), and on to the old 7th green. A practice green and bunker were added. The minutes also refer to a Captain's Dinner being held in 1963. This is the first reference to such a function and one can only assume that it was therefore the first Captain's Dinner held in the club. Up to that, the main function was the Annual Dinner and it was mixed.

In February 1964, the committee suspended a member, a very rare occurrence at that time. The member in question was, however, something of a legend both in his lifetime and afterwards. Indeed it would be fair to say that he was the object of many stories in the clubhouse for many years. He was a notoriously slow player and a fierce competitor. In one particular fourball match, and not being a long hitter, he was first to play his second shot to the 18th green, which he reached. To the consternation of his opponents and the surprise of his partner, he proceeded to walk all the way to the green to mark his ball, thereby preventing anyone else from playing for quite a few minutes. His opponents were furious but received no help from the committee on the matter.

In another amusing incident, he stood up at an AGM and questioned the money paid for a tee machine, as he spent a lot of time in the clubhouse, and didn't see that many people drinking tea. There was much laughter in the room and several people pointed out his error. He gave them all a withering stare and, not the slightest put out, proceeded to reiterate that it was too much to pay for the machine anyway.

Three shelters and railway sleepers were purchased for the course for £150 and a par three course at a cost of £493 was agreed. In the kitchen a gas cooker was bought from Calor Gas for £245. The GUI requested the proper measurement of the course for its records.

The most outstanding individual score recorded at the club over the century occurred in July when Terry McDonald shot a course record of 64, which was eight under par. An exhibition match some years later, of a select group of top golfers failed to better this magnificent score and the changes to the course years later ensured that this record would not be beaten. Terry went on to be one of the club's finest golfers, playing in the winning Barton Cup team and representing the club at senior cup and Barton shield for many years. It was always a source of amusement to him that when he first played senior cup, he was the youngest player on the team. Twenty five years later, he was still the youngest member of the team, when playing with Jerry Andrews, Danny Brennan, Noel Dempsey and Vinny Hughes. Terry received a silver tray from the club at the New Year's Eve function in 1966 to mark his course record and the card, counter signed by Mat Seaver, is still on display in the clubhouse. Another fine performance was the winning of the Lord Mayor's Cup in Clontarf by David Kinsella.

Controversy occurred later in the year when the captain had trees cut down without the permission of the committee. Needless to say the members were furious as well and this led to a rule passed at an AGM, which forbade trees being removed without members' permission, unless it was for safety purposes (due to disease etc.). There was a rumour that the trees were removed because they interfered with the right to left flight of the captain's ball ---allegedly. One crucial tree made the gap at the 9th extremely narrow, while another made the approach to the 10th green nearly impossible from the right.

1965 was the year that a Vice-Captain was elected, and this caused some problems at first, as some

candidates did not feel that captaincy should be automatic while others felt that it should. A new gang mower was bought and the committee decided to cover the cost of away meals. Jimmy Coleman joined the course staff and continued to work here for the rest of his working life. His holidays always coincided with a motorbike-racing event somewhere in Britain or Ireland.

The greatest highlight of the year if not the decade was the winning of the Barton Cup when the club defeated Newlands in the final. To add to the tension of the event, a play off was required as the two sides were level after the normal home and away fixtures. The match played in Skerries was very well organized with a marquee providing the extra space required for bar and catering. The marquee was 105ft by 30ft and cost £41/10s. Car parking facilities were available in Joe Coleman's field nearby. Representatives from Rush and Balbriggan and all the clubs beaten by Skerries were invited.

The final decider was played at Grange GC and resulted in a 4 ½ / ½ win for Skerries. The team that day was Terry McDonald and David Kinsella, Brian Hoey and Andrew Webster, Teddy Owens and Jerry Andrews, Charlie Byrne and Paul Grimes, and Mattie O'Hara and Niall Weldon. Niall was selected in place of Jack Ryan who had played in the previous two legs of the final. The outstanding play of the day was provided by Hoey and Webster who completed the first eleven holes in 39 strokes and won their match 8/7. Another pleasant feature of the day was that the captain was Frank Webster father of Andrew. It was decided to give replicas to all members who played for the club in any round of the competition and thereby gave support to the idea that it was a team effort.

The committee agreed to investigate the possibility of getting a captain's tie pin but the cost was thought to be excessive at the time and so it was postponed and didn't happen until Noel Duffy, who was vice-captain at the time persuaded the committee to do so in November 1975. The club was involved in stewarding the 12th hole in Portmarnock for the Dunlop Masters. The secretary Mrs. Malone resigned and for the time being Paddy Griffin took on the duties. The committee found themselves unable to appoint a joint Hon Sec. to assist Paddy due to the changes in the constitution in '51, and so within six months a new secretary John Grehan was appointed. The Xmas dinner that year was held in the Holmpatrick Hotel at a cost to members of 21s/.

In February 1966 the minutes noted that Jack Fulham was off machinery and his pension was being discussed. The AGM. Showed that the accounts were not good and a large increase on the subscription was carried by 37 to 35. The bar percentage was 20% and these factors contributed to a very stormy AGM the following year. At an EGM in May it was decided to proceed with some alterations to the bar and locker room (showers), but the dining room changes were rejected.

There were ongoing differences between the committee and the steward who felt that he was being blamed for the problems in the bar. At a full hearing of the committee he was informed that this was not so. However within the next two years, he had decided to give up the position and went on to join the club as a member. He was a tough competitor but he will be remembered for his gravelly voice, which could be heard all over the course. It was also decided to allow the ladies into the bar on the nights of functions and socials and after 8pm on weekends. No Xmas dinner was held that year but a formal function (black tie) was held on New Year's Eve in the clubhouse. Jack Fulham's retirement was confirmed for the 30th of September and a presentation was given to him in January of the following year.

Winter mats were purchased in January 1967 and at an EGM in February the finances were again the subject of seriously heated debate. It was clear that there were problems and a special committee was set up to investigate the matter. The secretary/manager resigned. Tensions at the meetings were palpable and this was somewhat borne out when the AGM was held. There was anger in the air and members were so angry that the statement of accounts was adjourned to the 20th of May when it was finally passed with more anger being directed at the committee. An increase in subscription of 50% was passed.

The practice of charging members an entry fee to the clubhouse on the nights of socials was questioned and was found to be unsound. It had been used to defray the cost of professional entertainment, hired to attract members to the club and therefore increase bar sales. While the majority understood this, a few took issue with the idea on principle and refused to pay any entry fee. This carried on into the 70s when the charge was finally dropped. Nowadays there is no need for it, as

the club is fully utilized.

A new secretary Tom Ryder was appointed in June and at the same meeting the whole issue of ladies' playing rights was discussed and at the next meeting, decided. This led to a certain amount of tension between the two sections of the club, and the captain Ivan Counihan asked Vincent Landy to draft the rules governing ladies' play to prevent misunderstanding. In October the club received a letter from the GUI updating the rules on amateur status and the course changed over to par rather than bogey. A club tie was agreed and the first orders were placed with F.X.Kelly. The tie itself was a silk one, black in colour with small goats' heads between diagonal lines. At the year's end the club was not open to visitors as a result of the foot and mouth disease.

1968 began with the club showing that the finances were back in line. This did not protect the committee from the anger of some members at the AGM who were still annoyed about the previous two years. Added to this was the expression of dissatisfaction with the catering by the ladies and the clear annoyance of the course staff, at the constant interference by members, with their work. Although the watering of the greens was a problem, other work proceeded as normal. The 4th(11th) fairway was drained, the ditch in front of the 1st green was filled in, a new strokes index was agreed and a Vice-Captain's prize was added to the fixture list.

New stewards, the Johnstones, were appointed and estimates of £1750 for clubhouse improvement were received. Heating was to be an extra £500. There was disappointment on the committee with the plans but with alterations, it was decided to proceed and to include heating at a total cost of £1757. An increase in subscription would be sought to assist in the work. The bar must have been going well (into the night that is) as the local sergeant seemed to be concerned about its closing time. An amusing incident occurred when a member used clubs without permission. When the owner, Mick Carron, father of members Ian and Sean and Louis, discovered that the offending member was on the course, he went out and confronted him, and forced him to walk in and replace the clubs in his locker.

A far more serious incident occurred in the bar that month involving two very prominent members of the club, and after a considerable time, in which the normal procedures for resolution failed, the matter ended when both parties agreed to a compromise to have the relevant minutes dealing with the complaint, removed. This was a change from the old club, where an apology was given and accepted, no matter how serious the incident.

In October new land became available to the south of the course, and to its great credit, the committee moved swiftly and agreed a price. An EGM was quickly summoned and the membership gave approval for the project. Board Failte agreed to give a grant of £12,000 towards the overall cost of £23,000 and in what can be described as a momentous decision, the club changed to an eighteen-hole course. It was a source of great pride to the Captain Vincent Landy and Vice Captain Charlie Byrne that the club took the opportunity to progress.

The land was in two parcels, Drumlattery (27 acres) bought from John Coleman, and Baldungan (10 acres) bought from Nicholas Jones. This change had a dramatic impact on the club membership. Firstly and obviously it increased in size, but also evident was the change in the social mix of the new members. The game, quite rightly, was being made available to a wider population.

The very early club was quite exclusive and representative of the old order. During those years the Bowes-Lyons sisters (the British Queen Mother's family) had played golf in Skerries. They were visiting Dublin for the Horse Show and were staying with club member Col. Fenwick Palmer at Kenure House. Changes were introduced by mainly well-off business people who continued to keep the club quite exclusive, but by the 60s onwards golf was a game for all. As one wag commented, "there's fellas in that clubhouse lookin' out that wouldn't have been let look in years ago." That may be an exaggeration but many will understand the sentiment.

1969 saw the use of a financial report at the AGM by the treasurer Pat Kennedy. The purpose of this was to give the members as much information as possible so as to lessen the need for a prolonged question session on the accounts. A new course plan was to be exhibited and this was duly done. The plan itself was designed by Eddie Hackett and the GUI gave a grant of £50 towards it. Mr. Gerry Enderson was appointed sec/manager of the club at a salary of £1000 p.a. Yet again there were

problems with the bar and the steward departed and after another couple had been appointed and declined the post, the position was eventually filled by Jim Mellows in the bar and M. Costello in the kitchen, and in May central heating was installed in the clubhouse. In April the committee decided to hold an exhibition match in which the professionals were to get £15.15s each and the amateurs would get a suitable prize. The four invited to play were Jimmy and Billy Kinsella, Joe Carr and Tom Craddock. While the professionals defeated the amateurs, no course record was recorded and so Terry McDonald's 64 remained unbeaten on the old nine.

The estimates for constructing the new course were received from Southern Roads Ltd. and from Gouldings. These were for £8311 and £3000 respectively and were accepted by the committee. In the case of Gouldings, maintenance of the new greens was to be included in the short term. The work carried out on the greens was of very poor quality as practically all of them had to be redone over the next decade or so. I remember the amazement of everyone when the second was being reconstructed. Just underneath the surface of the green, there was a sheet of galvanized iron and a very large boulder.

A map of the eighteen hole course was presented to the club by Eddie Hackett. The eighth hole was also extended at a cost of £150 and the committee approved the purchase of a rotary mower for £202 and this was used to cut the rough until the early 90s.

Before being given a handicap, new members were now required to take three lessons from Bill and one of these was to be on etiquette. To assist in the raising of funds a successful 100 club was run and at an EGM an increase of subscription was passed. At the same meeting Lord Holmpatrick and Paddy Griffin were elected Honorary Life Members. The one bone of contention for the committee was the work which had been carried out on the car park by Milverton quarries and this dispute was carried over to the following year.

1970 - 1979

At the beginning of the seventies the club finances needed serious attention and this was addressed by the introduction of a repayable £100 loan from members in 1973 by the then captain Paddy McDonnell. By the end of the decade 5 plans for a new clubhouse had been proposed to the membership between '78 and '79 and although these were not accepted, they placed the idea of a new clubhouse on the agenda for the future.

In January 1970 there was still some disagreement between the club and Milverton Quarries over the work done on the car park. This dispute carried on until August when the account was eventually paid 'under duress.' An interviewing committee was set up and at the AGM a new category of pension member was introduced. Changes in membership numbers brought time sheets for Saturday and Sunday competitions in April.

The Northern Bank was showing signs of worry. They asked the club to hold an EGM to discuss financial matters. The chief concern of the committee however was the condition of the new course. It clearly was not improving even with an extra man appointed to the staff in May. In September the Wednesday Golfing Society was formed with the full approval of the committee. Although there was some concern at first at the idea of a club within a club, the Wednesdays proved to be a very successful project, bringing members to the club on what was then a quiet day and providing an opportunity for new members to become familiar with other members.

It soon gained success and became a great social occasion for many with spoiled fifteen, table tennis (sometimes played with plates), and singing the order of the day. Also included were the special nights sponsored by J.J. Byrne and Freddy Stein which had salmon and turkey from Jim, and crubeens, spare ribs and sausages from Fred. The singing was unforgettable with Mick Metcalfe's Dublin songs, Wannie McConnell's 'You're Sixteen' Hugh Higgins singing 'Jim Reeves,' Brendan Geraghty singing 'Frauline' and pride of place going to Mick Moore with his own special rendering of 'There's a bridle hanging on the wall.'

At the end of the year, Des Cashell offered to present a special display board for club handicaps in memory of his aunt Ms Minnie Evans who had been the first steward of the club. She had provided the catering for the opening of the course in 1906. The committee also received a letter from Eddie Hackett, expressing his disappointment at the state of the new course.

In 1971 the club entered the Pierce Purcell competition and in February an internal inter-county competition, The Harp Cup, was added to the fixture list. It was sponsored by Batt O'Shea, who named the trophy after a public house he owned in Swords. There were problems in the clubhouse with the steward again and he was put on probation. The committee wanted the sub-committees to be more active and deal with the more informal complaints and also to persuade the membership to increase the number of members by getting their friends to join. I myself became a member at this time by simply signing the entry form in the bar and handing it back to the secretary/manager Gerry Enderson with the fee of £33 (+£33 entry fee). Bill Kinsella was allowed to play in the Wednesday competitions off a handicap of 6 and while this might appear generous, it must be remembered that Bill's legs were no longer what they were and left him at a serious disadvantage. It was still a pleasure to see him hit his irons crisply and cleanly.

The new nine holes were opened for play in June. A special sub-committee was set up to finalise all the arrangements with Des Cashell taking on the task of entertaining the ladies, in particular the ladies' committee who were guests for the occasion. The competition of the day was for members and friends with no entry fee. A nine hole competition was also run for the ladies. The opening drive was played by the captain J.J.Byrne and an official opening dinner was held that night. A photograph of the captain was on the cover of the menu.

On the course a new gang mower and green's machine were bought and Eddie Hackett recommended changes to the new layout at holes 6 and 8. Saturday outings were considered and mixed foursomes were agreed for Saturday evenings after 6pm. Ladies were given increased playing times but requested more. A price of £581 was agreed with Southern Roads Co. for piping the ditches. The committee also received a free offer of a sample of the club crest for a blazer, from a company called Mark Of Distinction.

In February 1972 the committee decided to change the term of Presidency from life to 3 years and at the AGM in March, Leo Flanagan was elected to that office. There was still some concern at the bar percentage profit which was too low but it was the course which generated the most worry. There were no improvements in fairways 4,5,and 6. The ladies were also looking for more playing time on the course but this time the committee said no. The minister for justice, Dessie O'Malley, was made an honorary member while staying in Skerries for his summer holidays.

The Lemass memorial trophy was added to the fixture card and the first Saturday in October was to be the day on which it was to be held. The committee again stressed the need for new members and a recruitment drive was initiated. By the end of the year there was discussion on the idea of a new clubhouse with committee members pointing to the availability of building materials from members who were in the building business. There were suggestions that the work could be done by direct labour. In the end it didn't seem to get beyond the talking stage. In December the club decided to enter the GUI mixed foursomes competition for the following year (this was known as the Independent Cup). The club also found it necessary to advertise for a new steward.

1973 was the year when the finances were tackled with a view to eliminating the club debt. In February a draw was held with the first prize being three years free subscription. The AGM in March was quite contentious with one member actually demanding the resignation of the whole committee. The new captain Paddy McDonnell set up a new system of sub-committees involving as many members as possible. Each chairman received a letter outlining a set of duties for each committee with the encouragement to add more if required.

In order to make the position of steward more attractive, it was decided to build a bungalow to go with the job. The materials were supplied by members and the work itself was completed under the supervision of Jerry Andrews. The club introduced an open week in August and an Intermediate scratch cup was added to the fixture list. The secretary/manager Gerry Enderson retired and in August he was replaced by John Fenlon. At an EGM in November five day membership was introduced and

pension rates for men and women were legalized. The intervals on time sheets were extended and Saturday outings were suggested between 10.30am and 12.30pm.

The committee now turned its attention to the club debt. An EGM was called and it was proposed that all members would give the club a £100 repayable loan. This would have the immediate effect of getting rid of our indebtedness to the bank and putting the club in a healthy position so as to be able to tackle the problems on the course. The meeting was one of the most crucial ever held and it was a difficult one too. There were many speakers and the atmosphere was at times quite tense. Many negative comments were expressed but in the end the proposal was carried by 86 votes to 82. Although this was quite a narrow margin, there are many in the club who think that the decision made that night was the one, which arrested the financial slide and set the club up for a healthy future. Amusingly enough, when the 4 years passed and the committee repaid the loans, many who had been negative about the proposal, suggested that the money be retained and put towards development. It was a great achievement for the captain Paddy Mc Donnell who showed great persistence and courage with the project. Paddy went on to be President and a Trustee of the club and his wife Helen served as Lady Captain. Their son John is currently a member and is well known for his prowess at the snooker.

In 1974 petrol was in short supply for a time and the club requested CIE to allow trains to stop at the halts. This was refused. There was continued discussion about a new clubhouse and this was given impetus by the visit of a health inspector to the kitchen in March after which he submitted quite a negative report. At the AGM however, the course was the main topic and there were calls for a greenkeeper to be appointed. A motion to cut down two trees at the 8th hole was defeated. Following the mood of the AGM the committee decided to carry out major improvements on the course. All of the new greens were to be reconstructed and the texture of the new fairways improved by spreading mushroom compost on them. A greenkeeper was appointed but did not remain for long. The steward, Joe Sommers, resigned and was replaced by Terry and Mary Rice. A new secretary's office was built by Michael Kearns at the entrance to the clubhouse and the old one was demolished to make extra space in the dining room.

Inter golf club socials were a great success and brought much needed revenue to the club. Late nights were a problem however and on two occasions were the subject of committee discussions. Card playing into the late hours was the main problem and on some occasions the front door was left unlocked all night as departing members thought that someone else had the key. The new bungalow was insured for £6000.

Plans for the reconstruction of the 5th and 15th greens were agreed and heavy slitting of the new fairways was carried out. Quite a lot of damage to underground water pipes occurred during this time as there was no proper map of the watering system available. The committee decided to look for new members by sending circulars to houses in north Dublin and by advertising in the Evening Herald. A club bulletin was produced and was to be published every three months. With so much happening there was some tension on committee and this led to a careful reading of the constitution for clarification of the duties and powers of club officers.

In January 1975 the committee received a request from the Kinsealy Research Institute, that Skerries would agree to be advised by Dr. Tom Kavanagh on course management. This was agreed and proved to be an excellent arrangement for both parties. Indeed many years later, when Tom retired, he carried on as our course consultant in a private capacity. His visits were always enjoyable and any members who wished to accompany him on his walks around the course, were welcome to do so. He answered all questions informally and informatively and at times would cut pieces out of greens to allow members to understand more easily what he was talking about, when describing thatch or compaction. Club sweaters became available to members at a cost of £4. (This represented a profit of £1.40). They were slightly different from the present ones in that the crest contained a rampant goat but no shield with mitre and sceptre. Card playing was to end by 2.30am at the latest as a result of concerns for clubhouse safety.

At the AGM in March it was reported that the bungalow and a new machinery shed had been completed and Jerry Andrews was thanked for his work on these. Batt O'Shea was also thanked for supplying the material for the car park extension, which allowed cars to use the space between the old car park and the railway line. There was a suggestion also that the dividing wall between the bar and

the lounge be removed but this was not accepted. John Baxter complained that the words Miscellaneous and Sundry were far too vague and indeed he became identified with them, as he asked about them at every subsequent meeting until detailed lists of each were produced. To give an idea how easy going or irritating things were, Kevin O'Brien proposed that the bar should close and card playing should cease during AGMs and this was adopted.

The committee decided to draft a set of local rules. P.J Griffin and I were given the task and these were agreed at the May meeting. It was also thought a good idea to close the doors of the clubhouse at 11pm on the nights of socials. As mentioned earlier this led to problems and eventually had to be discontinued. A Junior scratch cup was approved for the first time and it was decided to make the captain an honorary member in his year of office.

An EGM was called for July to raise the subscription and it was an incredible meeting in that it must have been the shortest ever. One of the characters of the club Jim Heraghty (affectionately known to all as Hego) was indulging in his second passion, playing cards. He was having a good run, something he didn't have too often and didn't want anything to disturb his luck. The Secretary had barely finished reading the notice convening the meeting when Hego stood up and in a powerful and wavering voice told all present that the committee needed this increase and not to be wasting 'bloody' time. He called for a show of hands immediately, something the chairman was happy to do and the proposal was passed. He departed to the card room leaving all somewhat bemused by the whole episode. Some members were only arriving for the meeting, while others had wanted a full debate.

The incident only added to the many stories told about Jim. He loved his golf, his whiskey and his cards. He had an amazing zest for life and relished every game he played, especially match play. In the club fourball match play, he once played and beat his opponents despite playing on his own (his partner failed to turn up). On late nights he could be persuaded to sing his favourite song 'Just a wearying for you' and on another occasion he drove home with his competition prize, consisting of crystal glass (in a box), sitting on top of the car. Some concerned members, seeing him drive out the gate, followed. When they got to the bottom of the road, they saw him reverse out of Shenick Lodge. He then proceeded to drive home and park the car expertly against the wall. Incredibly, the glass was in one piece and still on top of the car.

He played with a set of cruikshank golf clubs and always strode purposefully up the centre of the fairway as his ball was invariably there. Even in very advanced years he carried his clubs on his back and I have no doubt that stories will be told about him for many years to come. His grandson Mark Lacey is currently a member of the club.

The open week was a great success and the committee expressed thanks to Joe Cuddy, one of Ireland's top professional entertainers, for performing for free on the night of the last day, sponsored by the McConnell group.

In August the committee closed the course until 1pm on the national day of mourning following the death of Eamonn DeValera, former Taoiseach and President of Ireland.

A highlight for the captain, Michael Doggett was when Niall Byrne, son of Michael's closest friend Charlie, won the captain's prize and then went on to win the All-Ireland Phillishave Competition at Hermitage Golf Club, when playing off a handicap of five.

The playing times for ladies were still a problem and a sub committee was set up. According to the minutes, it was made up of 'hawks and doves' consisting of Pat Hynes, Sean Lynch, Noel Dempsey and myself. It's hard to know which was which but by September the report was received and adopted. As a result of excellent financial advice, the committee purchased 2,498 units of Gilt Edge Securities and this investment was to prove extremely profitable and helped in the repayment of the £100 loans.

A new club tie was designed by Don McBrien, father of present member Terry. It was maroon in colour and dotted with goat's heads. Finally in November, as mentioned earlier, a gold tie-pin was agreed for captains. The Vice Captain Noel Duffy also proposed that the captain's pin should be given to all past captains and this was approved.

In January 1976 the club ended its association with Bingleys who had been our course advisors for years. This was as a result of being involved with the Kinsealy Research Institute, which was local and easily accessible. Seats for the course were purchased from the B & I company, and through the good offices of former captain Brendan Bird, they were acquired for £1 each. A pool table was bought for the card room and this proved very successful both financially and socially. Full membership was closed at 453 and a waiting list was available for 5day applicants.

There were problems between the steward and the committee and these carried on until in October when he resigned, and was replaced in December by David O'Sullivan and his wife Ann. At the AGM in March a combined subscription fee for a husband and wife was introduced. To take the bare look off the new land, the committee organized a tree-planting day and thousands of trees of different species were successfully planted on a Saturday morning. Bacon and cabbage was provided in the clubhouse afterwards for all volunteers. It was also decided to start all committee meetings at 7.30pm sharp and end them at 11.30pm. While that might seem long by modern standards, it was a huge improvement on what had been the norm.

After 46 years as the professional at the club Bill decided to retire and his decision was made all the easier by the appointment of his son Jimmy to take his place. A Barna shed was purchased as a pro shop and this was sited beside the putting green. Although retired, Bill remained for some years keeping the shop operating while Jimmy played in various tournaments both at home and abroad. In the bar, the cheque book, which had been very useful to members when they found themselves short of cash, was withdrawn as a result of changes in banking procedures. Members now had to use their own cheques.

Only members of the committee were allowed to lock the club premises at night and the need for majority decisions of the committee to be supported by all was stressed. New light fittings were placed in the bar and lounge and these were generously donated by Frank Courtney, now sadly deceased. Frank was a fine singer and had a talent for getting a good sing-song going. This he did on many occasions, especially after inter-club matches when he would stand up, sing a song and declare that Skerries were one up. The opposition felt duty bound to reply and a good night was underway. Many members enjoyed the fun and comradery of those days and sometimes regret the conditions which have brought a more sober and serious side to inter-club matches.

A dinner was held for club sponsors for the first time and it was decided to present the tie pins to the past captains at this function. A suitable club crest for a blazer was also approved. A race night was held to raise funds and an EGM amended the rule on the paying of subscriptions. Up to this it was not uncommon to find some subscriptions had not been paid by August or even September. With the huge demand for membership, this became a thing of the past.

In January 1977, it was decided to investigate the possibility of sending a member of the course staff on a green-keeping course. Tom Kavanagh recommended the Botanic Garden course and this was agreed. It led to several of the staff availing of the opportunity to improve their qualifications and while some subsequently left us to work elsewhere, the present structures were put in place and Martin Browne is evidence of the success of the venture. Jimmy Kinsella was invited to play in competitions and it was decided to have the car park properly surfaced. To finance this venture, a loan of £500 was procured from a small number of members.

More trees were planted in February and these were surrounded by chicken wire for their protection. A ball coming to rest in these new plantations had to be dropped clear without penalty and this led to many arguments as to what 'clear' meant. In April the committee felt that a history of the club should be published and this led to the captain Pat Hynes producing the green booklet. Under the club heading, there was a photograph of the old clubhouse. Some of these are still available and I am grateful to former lady captain Sheila Douglas for lending me her copy.

The club won the Uden cup that year and from the photograph you can see that most of the players are still with us, albeit that they are a little older and a little grayer, with the exception of Joe Lundy whose hair is still jet black. Nobody knows how he does it and being in the painting business, there have been some ridiculous allegations that it is made of bristles.

Calor Kosangas agreed to sponsor a pro-am and this was brought about by the Vice-Captain Ed Sheeran, who was friendly with Denis Shelly M.D. of Calor. A letter was received from the Ballybunion golf club seeking support for their attempt to prevent coastal erosion. They offered life country membership to a nominated member for a donation of £250. The club agreed and in the raffle that followed, Colm Fagan won the nomination.

Colm was one of the club characters as was his friend John Keenan. They loved the cut and thrust of the bar-room discussions and in particular, ones which included much laughter. They had a boyish charm about them and Colm had what can only be called an infectious chuckle. As the clubs were founded in the same year it was decided to play Ballybunion in an annual tournament. The first match was played in Skerries and an excellent trophy was made available for the winners. Ballybunion won and in the next year we travelled to play them. It was clear that they were not that enthusiastic about the fixture and they were not even aware that the cup in their trophy cabinet was for the match. The fixture was not fulfilled again.

The club decided to connect to the mains water supply in June after 72 years of using its own supply. On the course some members volunteered to 'adopt' various holes and help in their maintenance. The finances were greatly helped by the successful running of a 300 club draw and another first for the club was the decision to hold the Eskimo open. In August the sec/manager John Fenlon resigned and was replaced in November by Bruce Copeland. The old professional shop was incorporated into the ladies' locker room but the proposal to build a squash court at the railway end of the car park was not agreed. An attempt to hold a fashion show and fancy dress function failed due to lack of interest. In December local clergy were elected honorary members and by the year's end the fund for the repayment of the £100 loans was right on target.

In Jan. 1978 the disease fusarium appeared in the greens causing quite an amount of damage, especially to the 13th green.

To improve the competitive nature of winter golf, a league was run and P.J.Griffin sponsored a cup for a Skerries inter-club competition to be held in summer. This proved to be very successful for some years but eventually fell by the wayside. In February the committee approved a Presidents' board for the clubhouse and a new pool table for the card room. Another Pro-Am was confirmed for later in the year and again the sponsor was Calor Kosangas. The entry fee was £10 per member and 35 professionals played.

At the AGM in March a very significant proposal was passed indemnifying committee members and trustees against debts incurred by the club. In order to get publicity for the club, sports journalists were invited to play a round and were entertained in the clubhouse that night. This had a modest amount of success and helped to attract more outings to the club. There was another visit from the health inspector and the report was again very negative. A new rule had to be introduced to prevent members from trespassing on neighbouring lands and a new tee was constructed at the 11th hole.

The open week was a great success but concern was expressed at the number of sponsors' guests taking up time sheet space. The club won the Uden Cup for the second year running. The Pro-Am made a profit of £26.07 and it was decided to have a qualifying round for the captain's prize in the following year. The 300 club draw was replaced by a monthly one and the rules governing the ladies' section were approved by Vincent Landy.

By far the most important issue of the year for the Captain Ed Sheeran, was the clubhouse. Visits by the health inspector, as stated earlier, were negative. The committee was made aware that it would cost a minimum of £45,000 to put things right throughout the building. A development plan for the clubhouse was introduced to committee. This proposal was to cost £170,000 and it was to be financed by levy of £220 on full members and pro rata on other categories. The special committee meeting called to discuss the whole matter was quite contentious and agreement to proceed with a united view was not possible. As a compromise, it was decided to let the plan go to an EGM and allow the members to decide. The meeting had a higher attendance than any in the history of the club, and the proposal was defeated by 255 votes to 55.

Soon after the EGM a deputation of members in the building business met committee representatives

and again suggested that the clubhouse could be built by direct labour at a greatly reduced cost. Nothing came of this however and the development was postponed until the following year. In December an advertisement for a greenkeeper / course manager was placed in the Evening Herald.

In Jan 1979 a presentation of a silver tray was made to Kay Morgan on being a member for 50 years and it was decided to appoint Maureen Hackett as an assistant to help in the office. Jimmy Kinsella was interviewed for the position of course manager and his appointment was ratified in March. Jimmy was now professional and greenkeeper. It is difficult to write about him. Where do you start? He was one of the country's outstanding golfers and won the Madrid Open, where he was followed closely by King Juan Carlos of Spain. His third place finish behind Ben Crenshaw and Hubert Green in the Irish Open in Portmarnock will always be memorable to those of us who saw it and it was magnificent to see the genuine affection in which he was held by the Irish public.

Off the course, he was 'something else' with a childish love of pranks and practical jokes ranging from the bizarre to the mad. It would take a book to relate them all. The first tee knows when he is present and if announcing your presence to all assembled doesn't put you off, a football can suddenly land as you are about to swing. Fresh 'devilment' could be seen in his eyes, but for all that he commanded great respect in the wider golfing fraternity and there is no doubt that, like his father before him, he has been a great ambassador for the club.

At the AGM the committee's decision to grant the captain honorary membership in his year of office, was raised by Leo Cauldwell, who wanted to make sure that everything was in order, but before a discussion could take place, Vincent Landy jumped up and said that not only was it a good idea but that it should be back dated. Leo, father of present members John and Carol (Duff), was another of the club characters. Although an excellent golfer and competitor, it was his regimental temperament that many remember. Everyone and everything had its order and place in the club as far as Leo was concerned and anything which didn't, met with either a glowering stare or stiff admonishment. Even the rooks in the trees were not safe from Leo's ire. On one famous occasion in late spring when the birds were at their raucous best, he stood over a two-foot putt on the 18th green. He duly missed and forgetting his normal reserved military bearing, he hurled a string of abuse in their direction and called them names never heard before or since.

On another occasion, when playing to the 18th green, he was in mid swing when a noisy rook caused him to duff his shot. In exasperated anger he flung his iron into the bag with such force that it bounced back out again and struck him full on the nose. His playing partners, Jerry Andrews and Johnny Bracken were doubled up with laughter. For some years afterwards some members (Mick Ryan being one), if they were losing to him in a match, would comment on the racket in the trees when Leo was about to play a shot.

In April clubhouse development was on the agenda again. The architect of the previous year's plan was asked to submit a new set of proposals containing a choice of 4 developments, one of which was for renovation of the existing clubhouse. This was duly done and they were put on display in the bar along with a suggestion box for members' comments. The committee finalised its plan in July, and in September an EGM passed the major plan by 84 votes to 67. By November it was clear that development costs were going to be greater than anticipated and this led to anxiety at another EGM. This in turn led to a division on the committee between those who wished to keep the levy separate from the plan and those who didn't. Another EGM was held and after a long and heated discussion, the members decided not to proceed with any of the plans by 61 votes to 53. It was the end of a difficult two years of attempts to improve the clubhouse but when we look at what we have now, the right decision was made.

In May Eddie Hackett inspected the course and in July submitted a detailed report in which he recommended that the 4th and 6th greens be improved. By October the 4th they had been completed. Portmarnock requested stewards for the Irish Open and this was agreed. Pat Hynes was asked to organise this and he has continued to do so ever since.

A pleasant feature of the year was the winning of the McDonnell Cup, a fourball matchplay inter-club competition for members whose handicaps were 16 and over. A letter was sent to CIE about the old halt but the reply was in the negative. It was never to be used again and in fact was dismantled some

time later. Measurement of the course was begun in July and was completed in September. The noise from the clubhouse on the night of socials must have been on the high side as there was a complaint from the residents of Greenlawns about it.

In November a letter of congratulations was sent to Brian Hoey who had won the Irish Close Championship that year. Brian had been a member of Skerries for some years and as stated earlier, he had also been a member of the successful Barton Cup winning team of 1965. He was regarded as a fine scratch golfer and went on to achieve international honours at the game. The archaic practice of inviting members to subscribe to a Christmas box for the staff was discarded and a bonus was paid in its place. The club organized an Xmas party for deprived children from Dublin and this turned out to be a great success thanks to the help of Paddy Hamill and friends.

1980 - 1989

With a new clubhouse off the agenda, the first of the renovations was decided in January 1980. A new tiled roof was completed very inexpensively with the help of Pat O'Connor, who was working in that business at that time. New electrical wiring was installed and the kitchen was to be improved. The ESB however refused to put public lighting outside the gates. In February a decision was made to improve the 16th green with the 6th and this was to be done under the supervision of Sean Kinsella. The need for improvements to the kitchen was given greater emphasis by another visit from the health inspector and this time he expressed 'grave concern'. The secretary/manager resigned in June and was replaced by Ronnie Forsyth. In August the steward, David O'Sullivan resigned and Charlie Purcell took over the bar duties and in February of the following year he and his daughter Valerie were appointed club caterers.

The plan for the renovation of the clubhouse to include a new kitchen, was ready and was presented to an EGM in September. After two years of development proposals and votes on various clubhouse plans, the atmosphere of this meeting was quite heated and many full and frank opinions were expressed. The main concern was, that the cost of the renovations would not be good value for money in the long term. In the next month the financial package was put together. There was to be a levy of £130, payable in two instalments of £65 each. New metal lockers were to replace the old wooden ones and were to be available at a cost of £20. Many of the more senior members regretted the passing of those old lockers with their brass plates. At the committee meeting in November a snooker room was added to the plan and the full proposal was put to the members at an EGM later that month. Again, the mood of the meeting was far from plain sailing, and despite an amendment from the floor, the proposal, which included the snooker room, was carried.

The committee decided to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the club in 1981 and although this was not strictly accurate, it was in line with what was done in 1956 when most of the 50th anniversary functions were celebrated. The function was to be a formal dinner with black tie and it was to be held later in the year. The ladies elected a President for the first time and the honour, very appropriately, of being the first lady president was given to Ina Halpin.

At the committee meeting in January concern was expressed at the rise in the development costs, which were up from £110,000 to £140,000. A small problem arose with the Wednesday Golf Society over its captains' board and its location and although it dragged on for a few years the matter was eventually settled in a satisfactory manner. At the AGM in March the spending powers of the committee were queried and three past presidents, Leo Flanagan, Vincent Landy, and Frank Healy were elected Honorary Life Members. In April 3,500 daffodils were purchased for the course at a cost of £100, and damage to certain areas was blamed on narrow-wheeled caddy cars.

The finances were still causing concern at committee level with regular disagreements noted between members of the finance committee throughout most of the year. The television in the lounge was causing a problem for the ladies on Sundays during the summer and this was to become a recurring problem for some years, being solved eventually when the new clubhouse was built. A highlight for the captain that year, Jack Murphy, was the winning of the Lord Mayor's Cup for the second time in the club's history by Paul Grimes. Paul had been a member of the successful Barton Cup team of 1965

and had represented the club at the highest levels for many years. He was an excellent golfer and a gritty competitor. I remember meeting him for the first time when he was playing senior cup for Skerries at Portmarnock in the early seventies. He was carrying his bag and was 4 down at the time and looked as if he was suffering. My offer to carry his bag was gratefully accepted and with the freedom to walk and think unencumbered, he went on to win his match. He represented the club at the highest level for many years afterwards until business commitments forced him to step aside. His competitive spirit was still in evidence years later when he won the Captain's (S. Stack) Prize in the Millennium Year.

The formal dinner was duly held to mark the 75th anniversary of the club and the clubhouse refurbishments were completed in time for the event. The function, hosted by the president Charlie Byrne and captain Jack Murphy, was attended by the president of the GUI Michael Murphy and the President of the Leinster Branch, Gerry O'Brien. The past captains who attended that night were individually photographed and these pictures formed part of the collection, which was put on display in the bar at the request of the captain. There was much comment, amusing and otherwise, about the photographs at first but eventually they became a focal point for discussion and a useful reference for members remembering when they joined the club. Nowadays captains are photographed in their blazers and the gallery has been given a new location in the new clubhouse.

In September a competition was held to raise funds for the newly opened St. Michael's House, which was situated beside the golf club. There was concern expressed at meetings at the level of blasting being carried out at Milverton Quarry, which some thought responsible for cracks on the walls of the clubhouse. Monitoring devices were put in place by the Quarry and blast levels were recorded at the club but nothing significant was noted at future meetings. At an EGM in Dec. an increase in the subscription was passed, but the course was still causing great concern.

In February 1982 a Greens King machine was leased and this was to dramatically improve the frequency in cutting the greens and in scarifying them. Greens could now be cut on the morning of competitions by one man, who was able to keep ahead of the early golfers with ease. At the AGM in March there was some heated discussion on the accounts.

At the next committee meeting there was quite an amount of anger at the overspend on the development. The treasurer insisted that all future cheques be signed by him and at a special committee meeting held in May the final figure for the development was stated as £170,000. Paul Reilly joined the bar staff and in Aug. the secretary/manager, Chris Farren departed and was eventually replaced by A.J.B.Taylor. More course machinery, a gang mower and a tee machine, was acquired and these improvements were greatly helped by the fact that the captain, Ted Williams had the expertise to advise the committee on all matters concerning machines. As a result of this, the course machinery was examined, improved, replaced and put on a very healthy footing for the future. Ted continued to help the course committee for many years afterwards and was consulted on all purchases. He enjoyed the social side of his golf and was especially pleased when the club won the McDonnell Cup that year. It is only in recent years that Don Kelly has taken over the extremely important role of machinery consultant.

In November it was decided to redesign the club tie and at an EGM an increase in the subscription was granted. A slightly contentious issue had an airing at this meeting and it concerned time sheets. Two quite prominent members had succeeded in getting off the first tee in a hamper competition despite the fact that neither was on the time sheet. This had the effect of causing problems for the later starters who were on the sheet but could not finish due to fading light. The committee decided to disqualify the two even though they had returned the winning score. As there were no rules at the time to cover this type of problem, they were reinstated on appeal and received the hampers. New rules were drafted to cover any future such misunderstandings and some very frank exchanges took place at the EGM.

In February 1983 Brendan Morrison joined the bar staff and at the AGM in March, Paddy Griffin was persuaded to remain on as Hon Sec if he was given an assistant. The captain Johnny Bracken asked me to take on the job and this I did. We were joined by a new treasurer Damien Dunne and Damien and I worked together for quite a few years. Committee meetings were reduced to 2 hours – a far cry from the 4 to 5 hour sessions of earlier years. New club ties were purchased and were available to the

members at £4 each. The mixed competition on Saturdays was properly organised and started at 4.30pm. Children in the clubhouse were causing problems and the rules were regularly being changed to reflect this. Part of the problem here was that some children were allowed to run unsupervised around the clubhouse and 18th green, sometimes playing in the bunkers when a match was approaching the green.

A 400 club draw was suggested and proved to be a great success. Tickets were £60 each. It was decided to drop flock day from the fixture list as some members of committee felt that it was an unfair system of playing for turkeys at the end of the year. Many members regretted its passing as it had been a great social occasion in the past with a full house and a party atmosphere. On the course the trees required remedial action and this was carried out by Tree Surgeons of Ireland. Many members were sad to see our mature trees undergoing the treatment required but the work was successful and saved some of our oldest ones, particularly the ash at the 9th, which still catches the errant drive. The 7th green was rebuilt and plans for improvements to the 8th and 17th were approved. This meant that the course, quite rightly, received the highest expenditure for the year. A highlight for the captain Johnny Bracken was the winning of the McDonnell Cup by the club for the second year in a row.

A matter, which caused much amusement or annoyance (depending on which side you were on) became known as the 'hit list'. There was a feeling on the committee that the handicapping system was not as effective as it should be. A list of all prize winners was drawn up using the computer which had recorded all data for the year. As the top group on this list had won a considerable number of prizes, it was decided to adjust some handicaps. This led to the name hit list being used and to a division on the committee. Those against felt that those who played most would win most, and that to cut their handicaps, was to penalise those who most frequently supported the competitions. The committee could not agree and so a system of points was introduced for future competitions to assist in general play reductions in handicap. Two EGMs were held at the end of the year. At the first, in November, a proposal to increase the subscription was not accepted but at the second, an amended set of proposals, which included a 10 year subscription option, was passed.

Continuing into 1984 with course improvements, the watering system was in need of serious attention. It was decided to improve the existing system on the 'new' course by changing the sprinkler heads and some of the piping. The 'old' course needed a complete overhaul. The work was carried out by a company called Vesta Irrigation later in the year. The well was rebored to a depth of 120 feet by Dunne & Co and this time the bore was protected by a 'sleeve' This allowed a more efficient submersible pump to be used and this was protected from the shale at the bottom of the well. For those who are interested in geology, our club is situated on a glacial moraine consisting mostly of shale. When we discovered this, the damage to the pumps over the years made sense. Loose impediments had been getting into the unprotected bore over the years and had 'clogged' up the works. This had, in turn, led to the motor of the pump having to be replaced.

The membership application form was made more detailed in order to assist the screening committee in assessing new applicants. At the AGM in March, Standing Orders were adopted for the first time on the proposal of the Hamill brothers, Paddy and Des, who felt that general meetings were far too long as a result of some members speaking at length and more than once on various topics. Despite the fact that these rules are part of the club constitution, it can on occasions, be difficult to implement them. At the end of the meeting the atmosphere was lightened somewhat by an appeal from 'Hego'(Jim Heraghty) that there should be an improvement in the standard of language being used in the clubhouse. This was accepted with a rousing cheer.

Skerries was requested to host the Irish Professional Golfers Association tournament and was delighted to do so as there had been many such professional events held at the club over the years. The sponsors were Tretorn Spalding and the tournament itself was won by Martin Sludds from the Island Golf Club. The quality field contained such notables as Des Smyth, Liam Higgins, David Feherty and the two O'Connors, Christy Senior and Junior. The whole event was organised by a sub-committee, chaired by Johnny Bracken and was one of the highlights of the year for the captain, Johnny Murray.

In the clubhouse an extension to the card room and stores area was agreed and a new cold room, a generous gift from a member, Dan Dowling, was installed. Despite this an unpleasant setback

occurred when a burglary at the clubhouse, resulted in a loss of £2,016. A new carpet in the bar led to the committee making a decision to discontinue the practice of allowing hot food to be served there. This was to be quite a controversial rule and during the rest of the year was the subject of much correspondence and heated discussion. The committee decided not to change its position, and this led to an EGM in the following year.

The committee also decided to change the club financial year and with the Vice-Captain, Larry Hughes agreeing to a shorter year of captaincy, a proposal was put in place for the next AGM. This meant that the club was in line with other clubs and that the captain's year and social functions coincided with other club captains. Another change for the general meeting was that Paddy Griffin had suffered a serious illness and resigned as Hon Secretary. It was the end of a special era in the club. As stated earlier, he was the second longest serving Hon Sec after E.H.Bailey and like E.H., he devoted most of his social life to Skerries Golf Club. As a golfer he had a most unorthodox but effective swing. On the greens, however, he was an excellent putter. As club secretary he was a stickler for the rules and the traditions of the club. He often reminded me that as long as the rules were adhered to, members might disagree and even get annoyed but could not justify personal attacks, knowing that rule changes occurred at committee meetings or general meetings. The photograph of his portrait in the clubhouse will remind us, not just of himself, but of the great contribution he made to the club we have today. His son Gerry went on to become Captain in 1986 and President of the club in the millennium year, his daughters Mary and Theresa, and his grandson Darragh are also members.

In January 1985 the Leinster Branch of the GUI clarified the system for cutting golfers' handicaps on general play by using a points system and at the AGM in February the constitution was amended to allow for a change in the financial year of the club. Officers and committee now took up office in December instead of March. The subject of hot food in the bar was again raised and it was to become a very contentious issue for the year. The matter was again raised at the next committee meeting and despite the sentiments expressed at the AGM, it was decided not to change the rule. Correspondence on the subject followed as some members were unhappy with the committee's decision, but again no change in the rule was the majority decision at the next meeting. Many members, unhappy with this, decided to call an EGM and proposed a rescinding of the rule. The debate was frank and at times heated but in the end, the motion was defeated by 128 votes to 70. The whole episode caused some unpleasantness in the club for a while and this was to surface from time to time with the committee insisting that standards of speech and behaviour be improved.

The handicapping system was computerised in late March, making life much easier for the sub-committee chairman, who had to write manually every score, venue and standard scratch score up to that time. The lady President was given a parking spot in April and at the same meeting a discussion took place on the availability of land adjacent to the course at the 11th, 13th and 14th at a cost of £4,500 per acre. The decision on this was postponed as other options were being explored. These included the land at the 5th, and 16th being also available. Over the next year many discussions on land requirements were to occupy committee meetings. On the course itself a new tee at the 9th was brought into use.

The death of a member Bob Kelly was recorded in June and while all deaths are a matter of sadness, it is even more so, when it occurs on the course or in the clubhouse. Bob had played to the first green and was approaching it when he suffered a fatal heart attack. Paddy Griffin's battle with his illness ended later in the year when his death was also recorded with great sadness.

In November it was decided to refurbish the minute books and Edmond Sheeran undertook the task. That he did an excellent job is obvious from the material available to me for this work and it is to be hoped that future records will be kept in equally good condition to assist in the next centenary history. The club constitution was brought up to date by myself, and having had it printed, a copy was circulated to each member with the documents for the AGM in December.

1986 was a very significant year in that the new land which incorporates parts of the present 4th 5th 6th and 7th was purchased and many of the meetings for captain Gerry Griffin involved the huge amount of organisation around this. In February it was agreed to build a new professional shop but this was postponed until the land acquisition was completed. An offer from the club of £2,500 per acre was refused and further negotiations followed. An EGM in Aug approved the project and the committee

improved its offer to £ 2,650 per acre. This was accepted and by November, Eddie Hackett had walked the land and was ready to submit a plan.

Meanwhile during this time the club received a letter from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on equal rights, asking us to outline the club policy on the status of women in the club. This was part of a nationwide survey being carried out by the government and our reply written by Vincent Landy, achieved notoriety in that it was leaked to the Irish Times and also featured on the Radio Eireann 'What it says in the papers' slot. On a brighter note the club got to the final of the Barton Shield in Royal Dublin in July and also to the final of the McDonnell Cup in the same month. In September the 14th green was re-constructed and the Skerries Bridge Club which had played cards at the club for many years ended its association with the golf club due to pressure of space.

In November the strokes index for the course was calculated on the computer and as this was based on cards returned in all major competitions and played from the back tees, a more accurate score card was now available. At the AGM in December there was a request from the floor for a members' hour on the first tee on Mondays Thursdays and Fridays. At the next committee meeting this was agreed and the hour from 1pm to 2pm was given the title members' hour.

Jimmy Kinsella was elected captain of the IPGA in 1987 and received the congratulations and full support of the committee for the year ahead. The club also decided to sponsor a nestbox project and this meant that the local St. Patrick's primary school made the boxes under the supervision of teacher John Shorten and these boxes were then placed on various trees throughout the course. The project proved a great success and featured on television the following year when the then Captain, Brendan Bird welcomed the Irish President, Patrick Hillary to the club to inspect one of the boxes.

The new professional shop was now built by Jerry Andrews and was opened later in the year by captain Peter Keogh. The committee also decided to buy a narrow strip of land at the railway line to complete the land acquisition. This cost £7,000. It was decided to plant grass seed on all the new land in August and stones were removed by the members

Members representing the club on teams were required to wear jacket and tie at the after-match meal. New safety measures were introduced to all sports clubs by new legislation and this required each club to have a current fire officer's report and certificate available when applying for a club licence. Concern was also expressed about general insurance requirements following an unfortunate incident at Castletroy Golf Club in which a young caddy was injured by a wayward tee shot.

The highlights of the year for the captain Peter Keogh, were the winning of the Captain/Professional tournament for the first time, and the selections of Bobby Kinsella and Barbara Ryan as youth internationals. The committee elected both of them Honorary Members in recognition of this outstanding achievement. Bobby is the son of Jimmy, our club professional, and Bernie, while Barbara's parents, Tom and Terry are active club members, Terry being elected the millennium lady captain. At the end of the year the course was once again mole ploughed and it was felt that the course could accommodate 4 Saturday outings during the following year.

In January 1988 the death of John Baxter was recorded with great sadness. John had been enjoying his usual Sunday outing and was playing cards when he suddenly passed away. The captain, Brendan Bird, who was present on the evening closed the clubhouse as a mark of respect.

It was decided to make a serious attempt to raise funds for general development and to that end it was proposed to have a major raffle in which the tickets were to cost £100 each. Much credit for the idea went to Eric Lewis who had previous experience in this type of draw and with the enthusiastic support of an energetic sub-committee it was a great success. Although there was lively debate on what constituted development, the refurbishment of the clubhouse was earmarked as a priority and with the captain taking an active role, and a sub-committee led by John McInerney, £25,000 was allocated to the project. A design consultant was employed and this proved a wise move. The work done brought the clubhouse up to a fine standard with new carpets, light fittings, upholstery and a new captains' board.

At committee, there was still some discussion on where the money should be spent with opinion split on whether the course should be included or whether the long-term plan should be a new clubhouse.

At any rate, the new land development carried on as piping was installed. Harrowing and seeding followed and as there was now an increase in the work, Martin Browne, was made permanent on the staff. He later went on to become the club greenkeeper and course manager. Plans for the new 18 hole course were put forward but the one which left out the 2nd was eventually to be the subject of an EGM. By September three new greens were nearing completion and in October new plantations of trees were in place.

In July, Seamus Mallon, the eminent SDLP politician was made an Honorary Member and Skerries held a Minor scratch cup for the first time. Skerries succeeded in winning the McDonnell Cup for the third time in the decade and a second trophy was won for the captain, Brendan Bird, when the club succeeded in capturing the Gallagher trophy in September. The club catering underwent a change of personnel, when Valerie Purcell resigned in favour of her brother Tony.

The sad death of T.B.Murphy (Tom) in November led to the Intermediate Scratch Cup being named after him. The cup had been sponsored by the Wavin company of Balbriggan where Tom had been employed since retiring from the army. The managing director of the company, Des Byrne thoughtfully suggested that the trophy should now be known as the T.B.Murphy Memorial Trophy as a tribute to Tom and this was immediately accepted by the committee. Another death recorded with sadness at the AGM in December was that of Nellie Hamill. As stated earlier in this work, she was a formidable lady and many members crossed swords with her at their peril but for all that she was great fun when you got to know her and she was regarded with affection by most of the old club. It says much of her that she still features in many stories and reminiscences about the club.

In 1989 a connection with the old club was established when Paddy O'Brien was elected captain. His wife Mona's father was Jack Fulham who had been associated with the club since the thirties. Paddy brought an easy going and laid back manner to the office and he persuaded the committee to restore hot food to the bar on a trial basis. It was short lived however and by July the rule was restored as a result of the effect the food was having on the new carpets.

Club teams were now required to wear club sweaters on the first tee when playing matches and to this end, the committee purchased a consignment of team knitwear to accommodate this. The watering system required ongoing maintenance and the new land layout was before the committee. The car park was also upgraded and was surfaced from the professional shop to the gate. The workload of the handicap sub-committee was improved when the facility for allowing members to enter their own scores on computer, was introduced by the manager John Taylor.

In August two lady members, Maureen Andrews and Mary O'Leary won the Daily Mail trophy in Britain having qualified from Ireland, and this was a major achievement both for the ladies' section and the club itself.

Two deaths, which caused great sadness, occurred in August and September respectively when Charlie Byrne and Bill Kinsella sadly passed away. Charlie was another one of the great characters of the club. He had been a most accomplished soccer player in his day with Shamrock Rovers and he brought his competitive spirit with him when he joined Skerries. He was a member of the successful Barton Cup winning team of 1965 and represented the club on many other occasions as well. Many will remember him most for the after-match and social activities in the company of his great friend Michael Doggett. He loved the cut and thrust of the clubhouse banter and if a good heated argument was not on the menu, he was equally at home in a good old fashioned sing song where he could always be relied upon for his party piece, the Al Jolson song 'Mammy.' Saturday and Sunday nights rarely witnessed his absence and I was fortunate to be part of quite a few. He had a mischievous twinkle in his eye, which usually announced that a good wind-up was on the way, and when the arguments were finished there was always a talented group of musicians, which included his son Niall,(guitar) and particularly Gerry Devey,(piano) available to entertain. Charlie served as Captain in '69 and '70 and went on to become President from '81 to '83. There is no doubting his high regard for the club and there is no doubt that he will feature in many stories and memories for many years to come.

Bill Kinsella was a professional in the old school. He had come to Skerries in 1930 and spent the rest of his working life there. Those early years were not always pleasant or comfortable for Bill. He was

frequently referred to by his surname by members and committee alike and there were many occasions when both he and they did not see eye to eye. There was even a time when he was not allowed in the clubhouse, something, which we nowadays might find astounding but which seemed to be common practice in many golf clubs at the time. As stated earlier, he was very involved in the work on the course as well as his professional duties, and he was also of great assistance to both Balbriggan and Rush golf clubs.

He was quite an accomplished golfer and was noted for his iron play, which he executed without taking divots. In more recent years he was known as a thorough and patient teacher and he was always interested in the progress of those he taught. He enjoyed talking about the game and could discuss the grip and swings of all the famous players – indeed there was nothing he enjoyed more than a chat with the many members and visitors who called to see him. Unlike those early years at the club, throughout the 60s and 70s he was always known as Bill. Old habits die hard and it was often difficult to get him to stop addressing members as sir. His family was involved in some way or other in golf. Sean, Maureen and granddaughter Mary are members of the club, while Jimmy, Billy, David and grandson Bobby are professionals. His photograph in the clubhouse (which I took) will always remind us of his long association with the club.

In December it was decided to propose a change to the term of office of the President by changing it to a two-year stint. It was further agreed to reduce the number of Vice-Presidents to one. These proposals were passed at the AGM in December.

1990 - 1999

One of the great highlights of this decade was getting to the All-Ireland final of the Pierce Purcell shield, and by winning the Leinster section of this competition, Skerries acquired a GUI pennant, not a common occurrence in our club. The clubhouse appeared again on the agenda and this time with success and our fine pavilion was built between '95 and '96.

January of 1990 saw the departure of the secretary-manager John Taylor to Gullane golf club in Scotland. John's main contribution to the club had been the introduction of the computer and its attending systems. His prowess at golf was quite limited as his main interest lay in quizzes and general knowledge, a factor, which was instrumental in his appearance in the finals of the television programme 15 to 1. While working at the golf club, he lived in the bungalow. This gave some members the impression that he was readily available whenever problems arose. John valued his free time and he became very irritated when this was disturbed. Some hilarious moments occurred when an unsuspecting member was sent up by those in the know to ask John for assistance at 7.00am. When the member returned, suitably chastened, he would find his 'friends' in a state of high amusement. John was replaced by John Harte. Tony Purcell left the catering and his sister Valerie took over that department. Rush and Skerries exchanged Honorary memberships for past captains and this extended the courtesy offered to our past captains by nearly all the clubs in north Leinster.

Changes were made to the bunkers at the 13th where the two steep traps were filled in and were replaced by one visible, surface one. Thanks to the excellent work on the wiring and cabling on the new land by Noel Duffy, the new greens were opened on Mar 16th and the committee decided to keep two options on the new layout. The members were invited to play both courses with a view to getting a consensus on a final plan. Bobby Kinsella achieved a scratch handicap and was selected to play on the Irish youth team again. The car park was lined to provide spaces for 93 cars in March and on the course an incident occurred, which gave an idea of the strength of soccer support in the club. Two members, one a fervent Liverpool fan and the other an equally keen Man Utd. fan, happened to meet on the 8th / 17th holes, when a remark by one nearly led to World War 3. It was quite some time before the matter was finally resolved by the committee.

As part of the ongoing course improvements, the captain Dermot O'Loughlin had a bridge built over the drain at the 9th fairway and the course staff was increased to 5. In the clubhouse a serious problem was detected by the secretary/manager when it was discovered that several kegs of beer were missing. The fact that this was happening at other bars and clubs because of Ireland's

qualification for the World Cup in Italy, was of no consolation to the committee. The loss to the club was of the order of £3,200 worth of stock, most of which was kegs. It led to a tightening of procedures in the bar area and a careful monitoring of all deliveries and collections.

It was decided to print a new type of diary and this was to contain a great deal more information on local rules and fixtures. At the AGM in December, a proposal from the floor to limit the terms of office of the Hon Sec and the Hon treasurer to 3 years was heavily defeated.

In January 1991 the green fee for the club was £15 while the entrance fee for members was £850 + a levy of £150. The price of the pint in the bar was £1.55p. The ladies elected a President for the first time and she was given a car parking space. In February the death of Lord Holmpatrick was recorded but it had little impact in the club, as there had been little contact with the Holmpatrick estate for many years. More tree planting and bunker changes were added to the course improvements and the ladies were given an extra half an hour on Saturdays before the mixed competition. A review of the membership policy by Johnny Bracken and myself was documented and approved by the committee. The captain's prize was to have an extra 9 holes and this provided a thrilling finish for Terry McDonald as his prize was won on the 27th hole by Kingsley Lewis. Shorts and jeans were banned from the clubhouse with the exception of the locker room. Team meals were standardised as some members felt that certain teams were getting better treatment than others. Although there was no success at inter-club level, there was a commendable performance from our youth team. They finished runners-up in the Leinster section of the Irish Club Youth tournament.

The new layout of the course was still causing concern particularly at the 6th and 7th where safety was the issue. This was resolved later in the year by moving the 7th green to its present location. In the meantime the new tees at the 4th 5th and 7th were approved and a layout was agreed. In the clubhouse the bar was back in line and a satellite dish was purchased. The club bye-laws were approved and printed and in September it was decided to recommend that past captains would be proposed for Presidency and Vice-presidency. The term for these offices was to be reduced to 2 years. A PGA tournament was approved for November but was not that well attended and it was agreed to sponsor the ladies team, which got to the final of the Townsend Cup. In October the balance sheet showed a healthy profit of £53,000 approx but at the AGM there was still a lot of contention about the layout of the new course.

This contention was to continue for most of 1992 where it was eventually the subject of an EGM called in July. The proposal had the slogan SOS, (save our second) and although the committee explained that the layout had not as yet been finalised, some members felt that the par 3 second was going to be excluded. The wish of the majority present was that the hole should be retained and this was agreed. As a result of this the present course was adopted as the final layout. Cross bunkers were added to the 4th making the second shot a formidable one. In January it was decided to publish the committee meeting minutes to improve the level of communication between the committee and the members. This came about as a result of comments passed at recent general meetings and the practice continues to this day.

The development raffle proved a great success and the first draw took place in February and at committee a captain's subvention of £2,500 was agreed. The club also received a lovely aerial photograph of the course from one of the members, Richard Lanigan and this was put on display in the hallway of the clubhouse. A slight downside for the year was the recording of another robbery, however on the plus side the club hosted one of the Metropolitan sections of the Junior Cup. The Best Cup team provided the members with some amusement that year when playing Sutton. Skerries won the first leg of the match 4 ½ to ½, and went to Sutton in high expectation only to be beaten by 5 matches to 0. Sympathy was scarcely detectable in the banter which followed.

The subject of new clubhouse development was very much back on the agenda again and it was decided that funds from the development draw would go towards this. I resigned as Hon Sec from the committee in July and the duties of secretary were taken over by the assistant secretary, Johnny Bracken, who went on to become Hon Sec at the AGM in the following year.

In January 1993 a new python system was installed in the bar to improve the quality of the stout, ales and beers and the famous 'Mens Bar' sign was removed and replaced by a 'Members Bar' one. At his

drive-in, the captain Damien Dunne appeared on the first tee and posed with his large family for a photograph. As photographer Tommy Coleman was preparing to take the picture, a senior member was heard to say, "Hurry up and take it before there's any more of them". The professional no longer had charge of the course as the staff now had the personnel with the qualifications to do the job. In February the secretary/manager resigned and was replaced later that year by Aiden Burns. A firm of architects (O'Dea, Moore and O'Brien) was asked to review the clubhouse and to prepare a plan of a new one for an EGM later in the year.

An attempt to place a pond in front of the 7th green proved unsuccessful and bunkers were placed there instead. 49 bunkers were drained and a mechanical device for efficiently raking them was purchased. Improvements to the sheds and surrounding area were also carried out. Fairway markers were introduced and the shaping of fairways received special attention. Arrangements were put in place for the hosting of a Metropolitan section of the Pierce Purcell Shield competition.

An EGM was held in May to discuss a plan of a new clubhouse and it was decided to request the architect to prepare a model of the plan to give the membership a clearer view of what was being proposed. In the following month this plan was costed at £630,000 but there was some concern at the general financial situation. Another EGM was held in July and the plan was proposed by the committee. It was defeated by 168 votes to 123. However the move towards a new clubhouse was not seriously derailed. It was felt that it was only a question of getting the right plan and the financial package, which would be acceptable to the membership. When the accounts were audited in October the development fund was increased. At the AGM it was decided to reduce the term of office of President to one year and another development was the appearance of the whole committee at the top table.

To help in the fund raising, a club classic day was proposed in January 1994 by Eric Lewis. It became known as the corporate day and the competition was a four-man team event with an entry fee of £400 per team, to be run in the summer months. It was the second major fund raising initiative introduced by Eric, who went on to be captain two years later. Another popular idea was the setting up of a 'Bunnies' competition and this became known as the 'goats' and was played on Fridays in summer. To accommodate the huge following for sport in the club, a large screen was purchased.

By March a total of £95,000 had been invested in government stocks and clubhouse planning was still very much on the agenda as the total development fund was £155,000 by October. On the team front the only success for the captain, Mike Neary was the winning of the Squire Ennis Trophy in Balbriggan. The significance of this was that the youth section of the club was showing great promise and this would be realised a few years later. Mike's accent made him stand out amongst his peers as it had a Dundalk flavour that was recognisable at 100 paces. He revelled in it and even suggested that he was the only one to talk 'proper' in the club. Any influence from a Fingal dialect had him stating that he would return home for elocution lessons.

The 4th tee was improved in appearance by Brendan Bird in April and a report on the 4th 6th 7th and 15th was received from course architects Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock. Another report was received from Paddy Merrigan. It was decided to adopt Mr. Merrigan's proposals at a fee of £5,000 + expenses and so by November a plan was put in place. The committee decided to put this plan to the AGM in December and that the architect himself would address the meeting. The clubhouse proved to be an unsuitable venue due to overcrowding and it was decided to seek an alternative venue for the next meeting. Another decision taken that night was to drop Saturday outings from the fixture list.

A report in January 1995 that land was available led to a feasibility study being agreed by the committee and much discussion was directed towards a greater type of development that would include land acquisition with a new clubhouse. A special committee meeting took place in March to agree the wording of a letter to the members for the forthcoming EGM and two months later another special meeting agreed procedures for the same meeting. In the same month Bobby Kinsella was appointed assistant professional to his father. The captain's prize was to be played over 27 holes and the rule requiring knee length socks with tailored shorts was amended to suitable socks.

The EGM took place in the Windmill premises in May. All the proposals except one were not accepted and that was the one on clubhouse development. As a result of this the committee set up a temporary

building sub-committee in June comprising of the captain Eddie Maher, Stafford Stack, John Dignam, and Aiden Burns. They were soon joined by Barry Keogh whose expertise in the construction business was invaluable. An architect, John Cantrell of Cantrell and Joyce was appointed to design a new clubhouse and the treasurer John Chapman set about putting a financial package together.

The proposed costing of the clubhouse was outlined at committee as £780,000. There was £200,000 in the development fund, 20 members were to be offered life membership for £5,000 and 20 more were requested for a loan of £5,000. The balance was to be collected by way of levies. The committee preparations were excellent and after more special meetings on procedure, the plan and financial package were put to the members at an EGM in the Windmill in July. In what can be described as a historic decision, the members passed the proposals and a snack bar was even added. Clearly the right plan and the right package had been offered. It was fitting that the chairman that evening was the President, Edmond Sheeran who had proposed the first of several new clubhouse plans in 1978.

Temporary accommodation was costed at £9,200 but was later acquired at a cheaper rate. By October, dates for the demolition of the old clubhouse were agreed and a special 'last night' was organized. Charlie Purcell arranged an exhibition of photographs and memorabilia of the club in the old card room. Nostalgia was in the air and local artist, Hugh Ryan was commissioned to produce several paintings of the clubhouse. Meanwhile the building contract for the new clubhouse was awarded to the building firm of John McCabe.

A captain's blazer for the lady captain was to be supplied by the club from now on and the ladies' committee proposed that all social areas of the new clubhouse would be accessible to their members. A highlight for them was the winning of the Daily Mail trophy by Mary Leonard and Mary Kinsella.

Although the new clubhouse was under way there were still some concerns being voiced but the sub-committee steered a steady course through another EGM in November. The AGM in December was notable for the number of motions, which were on the agenda, and for the fact that the meeting had to be adjourned due to the lateness of the hour. One amusing incident occurred when Kevin Mooney proposed that the ladies should have access to all the social areas of the new clubhouse. Leo Flanagan felt moved by the 'spirit' to point out in a loud voice, which suggested righteous indignation, that there should always be 'a den for the men'. There was much hilarity when the vote was taken, when Leo was observed voting for the motion with both hands in the air.

At the final committee meeting of the year the club decided to part company with the National Irish Bank and change its account to the Bank of Ireland. This ended an association with what had been the Northern Bank, an association which had been in place since the foundation of the club. It was also agreed to set up a sub-committee to do a complete review of the club constitution and bring recommended changes to an EGM at a future date.

By January 1996 the old clubhouse was gone and the new clubhouse was under way. Temporary accommodation was being used and this led to changes in security arrangements with the bar closing most evenings at 7.00pm. This was extended in the following month. The cost of being a five-day member was set at £2,850, which included a levy of £350. A substantial course plan was put in place by Niall Adderley with most holes receiving attention. Many of the improvements at the first tee were included here. The Irish open was to be held in Druids Glen and Pat Hynes was asked to provide stewards for the event. In February the GUI confirmed that VAT was now to be charged on green fees and the committee agreed a points system for handicap purposes for competitions other than singles. These competitions were placed in two categories, major and minor, and points were awarded accordingly. Once 8 points had been achieved the player's handicap was reduced. Congratulations were extended to Darragh Wolfe on being selected on the Leinster Youth panel and to Jill Bennett on being picked as first reserve on the girl's team. The new clubhouse was taking shape and although it would be ready for Open week at the beginning of July, it was decided to have the official opening on the 4th of Aug. The President of the GUI, Eamonn Curran, was to perform the ceremony and it was further decided to have the captain's dinner on that night and that a marquee would be used to facilitate a mixed function. To improve security in the new building, a swipe card system was agreed. At the April meeting, some £45,000+ extra expenditure was approved for a variety of requisites ranging from a p.a. system to kitchen equipment. In May a further £18,000 was allocated for the new clubhouse. On a suggestion from Ed Sheeran, the committee agreed to have

club records microfilmed. The club lotto was proving a great success and in May the weekly earnings were £400 on average.

The new clubhouse was ready by the end of June and it was decided to open it on Friday 28th at 7.30pm. After a brief and informal opening ceremony all members present were invited to join the committee in celebratory drinks. The one problem lay in the size of the ladies' locker room, which was too small. The committee decided to provide a long-term solution by consulting with the architect and bringing new proposals to the membership. This caused some tension with the ladies' section as they requested extra space immediately. The matter was finally resolved when the extension was built.

Congratulations were extended to Brian Leonard on being selected on the under 17 Leinster panel. Brian was a member of the Senior Cup team which had the distinction of reaching the final of the Leinster provincial section at Baltray. Although the team was beaten by Royal Dublin, it was an excellent achievement in that it was the first time the club reached the final of the Senior Cup. Also playing that day were Rory O'Keeffe, Robert Lee and Frank Gannon.

At the August meeting, the death of Dermot Woods was recorded. What made it more poignant was the fact that he was Vice-President of the club at the time. He had been my Vice-Captain in 1979 and was known throughout the club as a thorough gentleman enjoying both his golf and the comradery in the bar afterwards. His son Ronan is a member of the club and still plays his weekly game on a Sunday morning at approximately the same time as Dermot had always done. Another member who had died earlier that year was Gerry Manners. Gerry had served for many years on the committee with great enthusiasm and had played an influential role in the juvenile and junior sections.

Valerie Dowd resigned as the club caterer and was replaced later in the year by Martin McNulty. Later in August, a special EGM was held to elect two trustees and for the first time an election took place for these positions. P.J.McDonnell and Ed Sheeran were duly elected to fill the vacancies. In November the committee agreed to display photographs of Sean Lemass, Gerry Owens, Bill Kinsella and Lord Holmpatrick in the clubhouse on the recommendation of Charlie Purcell.

At the AGM in December the final cost of the new clubhouse was stated as £863,352. Some confusion arose on voting procedures and this led to the election of committee members having to be declared void subsequently. Another EGM had to be called to rectify the position. Mr. Kevin Branagan was elected an Honorary Life member, having joined the club as a juvenile in 1935 and as stated earlier in this work, the family connection stretches from his father in the twenties to his grandchildren today. This is an extraordinary continuity of a family association with the club. The meeting also approved an extension to the clubhouse to include improved locker room facilities for the ladies, relocation of the snooker room to the first floor and the extension of the television room. This was stated as costing £55,000 approx. The review of the constitution was said to be progressing and should be ready in the following year.

The EGM to sort out the committee vote at the AGM was held in January 1997 and it was fitting that the same people were elected. The club agreed in February to hold the Irish Youth Championship in June, and at the same meeting it was decided to obtain quotes for the erection of toilet facilities on the course. 30 trees were given to the club by Brendan Bird and the location of these was left to the course committee. A Mr. Peter O'Brien was invited to examine tee boxes and quotes were received from him to rebuild the 7th, 11th, 14th, and 18th. It was decided to proceed with two of them and in the clubhouse a computer unit was installed in the entrance to the locker room for entering cards in competitions. A profit of £9,000 was reported on the club lottery by John Kirwan, making it a valuable source of revenue.

The captain, John Chapman, gave the club a display cabinet and the age-old problem of the behaviour of children in the clubhouse was again the subject of a lengthy discussion at committee meeting. In May planning permission for the extension to the clubhouse was granted. The soil for the construction of the new tees at 7 and 14 was to be taken from the corner at the 8th hole and this allowed the preparation of this area for a pond / water hazard. The review of the constitution was declared ready, but an EGM on the matter was postponed until all points relating to lady associates becoming full members were clarified. The subject of Charlie Purcell's retirement was discussed and it was decided to run a week-end competition at the end of August to mark the occasion. This proved an outstanding

success due to the organisation of Bob Mulvaney. As Charlie had requested that no formal presentation should take place, the committee agreed, and the captain, John Chapman, decided to make a personal presentation to him on the night of the captain's dinner.

Saturdays, which were given to ladies for their major competitions, were to be run on a time-sheet basis from 10.30am to 2.30pm and it was confirmed that 50 caddy cars had been purchased for members' use. A piano was also acquired in July. A contract for the maintenance of clubhouse plants and flowers was agreed at a cost of £40 per month.

At inter-club level, it was one of the better years for the club with the Barton Shield team finishing runners up in the Leinster final. However, even this achievement was overshadowed by the Pierce Purcell team, who won the Leinster final and qualified for the All Ireland finals at Dundalk. It was the first time the club had won a provincial pennant since 1965. As a memento of the occasion the committee presented the team with club shirts and jumpers. Semi-open competitions run on Wednesdays to defray the cost of the team's expenses, raised £1,800. Further success followed with Declan Walshe and Colm Sherlock winning the All Ireland section of the Daily Mail foursomes.

A sample of a new club tie was considered and at the next meeting in August it was decided to stock the new design. A revised estimate of the extension cost was agreed at £62 – £65,000 approx. There was still concern at the danger to the clubhouse that might be caused by the severity of the blasting at the quarry and letters were sent to the owners on this matter in Sept. The first tee was prepared for winter golf by the placing of an all-weather mat on it at a cost of £980. Twenty five additional caddy cars were purchased for members' use. At the November meeting Ronan Early and friends were thanked for the supply of 100 trees to the club. In Ronan's case this added to the outstanding work of restoration of the 12th tee carried out by him years earlier.

At the AGM in December the Hon Treasurer Damien Dunne resigned and was replaced by Cecil Keaveney. The deaths of Gerry Owens and Leo Flanagan, both of whom appear regularly in the early part of this work, were recorded. Another sad loss was that of Jerry Andrews, one of our finest golfers and a marvellous ambassador for the club whenever we played Senior Cup, Barton Shield and Barton Cup. He was a self-taught golfer, developing a swing and hitting action all of his own. Throughout the best part of three decades he was synonymous with Skerries golf club. I recall caddying for him in the early seventies, when he was very popular at every scratch cup and tournament we attended. Both he and T.P.McDonald, although having two different styles of golf, had one thing in common and that was that they practiced for hours at a time to remain the top golfers in the club, and as such they should be the role models for our emerging players. By the end of the year a new club tie (our current one) was available.

In January 1998 the committee agreed to purchase a hollow tining machine for £10,000 and a mini digger for £5,000. This showed the strength of the financial position of the club and was in marked contrast to the days when committees argued over the price of a weed-eater for £300. In February Martin Andrews joined the bar staff and Derek Hughes joined the course staff. The category of University membership was redefined and the rules governing transfer from this section to full and five-day levels were agreed. The entrance fee for new members of the club was increased from £2,500 to £3,000. The levy of £350 for 5day and £500 for full remained. The entrance fee for ladies was agreed at £1,500 plus a levy of £350. Receipts from the club lottery showed an average of £900 per week.

A new system of supervising society-starting times was introduced and a committee member was allocated this task. On the suggestion of the captain, Barry Keogh, a sub-committee, chaired by Brian Cregan was set up to plan millennium year celebrations. Following the April meeting, the club president John Bracken attended an explanatory session with the committee regarding the proposals for the alteration of the club constitution. Proposed changes to the rules were submitted and at the next meeting the committee's response was submitted to the sub-committee for inclusion if passed by the legal adviser.

On the course a new mat was installed on the 13th tee and was ready for play in May. It was agreed to proceed to enlarge the 16th tee and new paths were to be constructed by Mick Emery. In June the committee decided to honour the memory of Jerry Andrews by placing his portrait, along with

appropriate details of golf achievements, in the TV room. A highlight for our 'senior' members was the winning of the J.B.Carr, Dublin County Pennant, while the Youths team won the Leinster pennant. It was agreed to provide blazers etc for the All-Ireland finals in Youghal. Another excellent achievement, was provided by Maria Dunne, who qualified to represent Ireland in the Weetabix tournament in England.

In October the committee received a submission from Fingal County Council indicating a strip of land near the 10th tee required for road widening and this was approved, as it had been a condition of getting planning permission for the new clubhouse. The strip required was 70m by 10m. At the next meeting planning permission was received for a toilet facility at the 10th tee.

At the AGM in December the death of Kevin Branagan, of whom I have written earlier, was recorded. Also recorded was the death of Jim Campbell. Jim had been a country member of the club since the sixties and had come to Skerries with his family every summer. He had what can only be described as a passion for all aspects of the game, from its history to the design and make of every type of club. He himself was an excellent golfer and when not on the course, could recall most of his games and the games of those he saw and admired. Many a game was enjoyed with him on his summer visits and his genial, gentlemanly manner and northern sense of humour made him a very popular companion both on and off the course. He was Captain and President of his home club, Fort William in Belfast, where he entertained some members of Skerries on his President's day. An abiding memory of him will be that of the man, sitting in the bar, pipe in hand, pint in front him and he laughing heartily at a joke or informing his company of the merits or demerits of some modern or ancient piece of equipment.

In January 1999 the green fee increased to £25 (£12.50 with a member) on week days and the entrance fee was increased to £3,850 for men and £2,100 for ladies. On the course the committee approved expenditure to an outside contractor J.T.Landscaping, of £36,000 (later £38,000) for drainage to holes 1,9,18,8 and 17 and this work was carried out later in the year. Another decision made was the granting of honorary Pavillion membership to former captains and lady captains who were unable to play golf. Proposals for the millennium were agreed. These included a New Year's Eve function at a cost of £60 per ticket and a draw for a car with tickets costing £50 each.

In March the juvenile fee was increased to £20 for existing members and £50 for new applicants. It was also decided to postpone the building of the toilet facility at the 10th tee. On a musical note however it was agreed to purchase a guitar and this led to extra helpings of American Pie for the unsuspecting bar fly. In the bar Gillian Caldwell joined the permanent staff while Frances Bennett resigned from the office staff in May and was replaced by Sara Golding. The construction of the extensions to the 16th and 2nd tees commenced after a frustrating delay caused by bad weather.

The youth section of the club had pride of place at inter-club competition, with the girls winning the Leinster section of the Smurfit Junior Girls Trophy and the boys finishing runners-up in the Junior Foursomes. In August it was decided to decrease the number of visiting captains invited to the club captain's dinner. With golf getting more popular, the guest list at annual dinners had grown and it was felt that there were too many functions for the captain to attend. To that end Skerries invited the captains of Balbriggan, Beaverstown, Donabate, Forrest Little, Rush and Turvey to its dinner. At the same meeting it was agreed to ask me to write the history of the club.

A verbal quotation of £12,000, received for the construction of the pond and fountain between the 8th fairway and the 14th tee, was accepted subject to verification, and by September the contract had been agreed. Winter golf saw a scheme whereby different sequences of holes were played on different days, thus allowing some greens to be rested. Planning permission had been received for the construction of a new entrance to the club and the contract was awarded to Creative Stone as a result of their quote of £25,000. An indication of changing times was the mention at the November meeting that a member was available to assist in the setting up of a club website.

At the AGM in December, Stafford Stack was elected Captain for the Millennium year while the ladies elected Terry Ryan as Lady Captain.

It was agreed that all future significant development proposals for the course should be brought to the members attention for input. At the final meeting of the year, it was agreed that the P.J.Griffin Cup,

(originally donated for a competition for Skerries sports clubs) which had not been on the fixture list for some time, would be presented for the Christmas snooker competition on a perpetual basis.